



Nathaniel Hawthorne

From the portrait painted by Charles Osgood, 1840.

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# *Nathaniel Hawthorne*

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Mark Van Doren

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*The American Men of Letters Series*

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## Preface

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THIS critical biography of Hawthorne tries to keep a balance between narrative and comment. The man is a comment upon his writings, as they are upon him. But this is not completely the case; and so every book about Hawthorne has left some space between the two halves of its subject. Mine does so too, and cheerfully; though I have made every effort to harmonize the works and days of an unusually mysterious artist. My aim, that is, was to keep the story relevant, and I hope it will seem so even when it has the air of being told for its own sake. The story of Hawthorne is so interesting, and somehow so touching, that one is tempted to forget the fact of his having been an author, though in his own opinion he was only that. I am very fond of him, and therefore I felt the temptation; but I resisted it as best I could, and remembered to discuss his books, when the time came to do so, as if I had no special sympathy with their writer. It will be seen that I am not equally fond of them all. Few of them are praised here, and only one of those at length, or highly. I felt obligated by Hawthorne's own honesty to distinguish as sharply as possible between his best work and his

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good work, and then between his good work and his bad. The best of it deserves and can endure this isolation.

A bibliographical note at the end lists some of the many books and articles by others without whose help I could not have proceeded. It is pleasant at this point, however, to speak of the extraordinary help I got from Norman Holmes Pearson, of Yale University. Not only did he give me access to the Hawthorne Correspondence Project upon which he is engaged with Stanley T. Williams, Randall Stewart, and Manning Hawthorne, and which will result in the first full collection of Hawthorne's letters ever to be published. His kindness moved him in addition to lend me the excellent paper he wrote in 1932 on Hawthorne's life at Bowdoin; to assist me in the study of his forthcoming edition of the French and Italian Note-books; to put me in touch with Edward H. Davidson, whose invaluable dissertation (Yale, 1940) on *Hawthorne's Last Phase* was being revised for publication, and whose critical edition of *Grimshawe*, when it appears, will be equally invaluable; and to suggest that I apply to Randall Stewart and the Yale University Press for permission to read the page-proofs of Mr. Stewart's *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography*. The permission was given, and I hereby thank them both. Mr. Stewart's book, scheduled to appear before mine, is one to which I have been indebted at many points. Its author knows more about Hawthorne's life than any other living man. I kept his work always at hand, as any writer on the subject henceforth will. Mr. Davidson, with the same generosity, sent me manuscripts of his two studies in progress, and eventually provided me with proofs of *Hawthorne's Last Phase* (Yale University Press, 1949).

Since the bibliographical note is no fit place for express-

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For certain further obligations that I feel, I express them here. One is to Newton Arvin, for suggesting that I read Osborn Kendall's *Maria Mitchell*. One is to R. P. Adams, whose discussions with me of the essay on Hawthorne he was writing at Columbia University have illuminated many matters. One is to my brother, Carl Van Doren, whose criticisms of Hawthorne are among the best I know, and to whom as I made the present study entertained and supported by his ever living conversation. The last is to my mother, because the present she gave me when I graduated from college, thirty-four years ago, was the Old Manse edition of Hawthorne's works, twenty-two salmon-colored volumes which by this time, certainly, I have read through and through.

M. V. D.

New York

1918



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## Salem and Bowdoin

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A MILD, shy, gentle, melancholic, exceedingly sensitive, and not very forcible man"—so Nathaniel Hawthorne, writing in 1851 the preface to a new edition of *Twice-Told Tales*, said its author had once come to be regarded. "He is by no means certain," the preface continued, "that some of his subsequent productions have not been influenced and modified by a natural desire to fill up so amiable an outline, and to act in consonance with the character assigned to him; nor, even now, could he forfeit it without a few tears of tender sensibility."

Hawthorne, who like many another taciturn man could be loquacious in print, was fond of photographing himself in this playful fashion. He knew how much he left unsaid, and yet he knew how truly he had spoken. His self-knowledge, perfect to a fault, was consistent with a genius for mockery which spared least of all the man who saw his own shadow so clearly. "A mild, shy, gentle, melancholic, exceedingly sensitive, and not very forcible man"—there Hawthorne is, but we must remember that it was he who wrote the words. This remembered, we are ready to go on and see what else he was. For he was certainly more than

the Oberon—"an assumed name," he recalls, "the quaintness of which was supposed, somehow or other, to symbolize his personal and literary traits"—of the amiable outline. He was also the author of *The Scarlet Letter*, which after a century still stands among the most forcible narratives in the world; and he wrote the introductory chapter to that book, a chapter whose brightness, whose hardness, nothing has changed.

Hawthorne's life explains his work even less than is normally the case with men of excellent imagination. Many who knew him saw little or no relation between the two; and this was not merely because certain tales gave astounding—or was it terrifying?—evidence of where his mind had been. Most of the tales gave no such evidence; Hawthorne seldom used, seldom perhaps possessed, his full power. On the whole it was rather that his friends missed in the romancer the cool, humorous, self-ordered, silent person with whom they had walked and talked, the person who could be both kind and cutting, and who sometimes seemed scarcely a person at all. The poet was now softer, now profounder, than the man. Yet the man too was interesting. He was even puzzling. Apparently candid, he was actually impenetrable. No one doubted therefore that he had his secrets, even though these might be nothing but the secrets of imagination. Nothing but. The biographer, faced primarily with those, has to look for them both upon and beneath the singularly charming surface of the man.

He was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on July 4, 1804, with the name Nathaniel Hathorne, a name whose spelling, if not its pronunciation, he was to alter after he came of age. Both his father's family and his mother's were ancient in Salem. His mother was Elizabeth Clarke Manning,

and since 1679 the Mannings had been sober, successful traders in the town. His father, Nathaniel Hathorne, was a sea-captain whose voyages took him around the earth from the busy little port where all of his American ancestors had lived. He himself is said to have been reticent and melancholy; to have been an assiduous reader at sea; and when at home to have withdrawn himself from the notice of Salem as all the latter Hathornes did. For the family luck, whatever it once was, had visibly declined, so that any Hathorne who was proud—they were all proud—needed to master the arts of indifference and reserve. The father of the elder Nathaniel was Bold Daniel, or Bold Hathorne, of the Revolutionary ballad. His father was Joseph, a farmer of Salem township. Then back of Joseph loom William and John, the seventeenth-century father and son whom their famous descendant has said he was never able to forget.

“The figure of that first ancestor,” Hawthorne wrote in his introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, “still haunts me. . . . He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a bitter persecutor, as witness the Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity towards a woman of their sect, which will last longer, it is to be feared, than any record of his better deeds, although these were many.” That was William Hathorne; next comes John. “His son, too, inherited the persecuting spirit, and made himself so conspicuous in the martyrdom of the witches, that their blood may fairly be said to have left a stain upon him. . . . I know not whether these ancestors of mine bethought themselves to repent, and ask pardon of Heaven for their

cruelties; or whether they are now groaning under the heavy consequences of them, in another state of being. At all events I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them—as I have heard, and as the dreary and unprosperous condition of the race, for many a long year back, would argue to exist—may be now and henceforth removed.”

It is always hard to know how serious Hawthorne is when he speaks in the first person, but here there can be no doubt that something in him is sincerely engaged. For the most powerful theme in his stories is public confession, and the foregoing is such a confession—the only one he ever made. Also, there are the epithets with which he presents William Hathorne to the reader's eye: “grave, bearded, sable-cloaked and steeple-crowned.” Any student of his tales knows how many times these syllables march across the page. Here is the figure of Hawthorne's controlling myth; and here too is the reason he finds for the fact that he himself is poor, and for the obligation he feels to be indifferent and proud. He may not have been thinking of his own family when in England once he noted “a taint in the Byron blood which makes those who inherit it wicked, mad, and miserable.” The terms are too strong. Yet it was natural for his imagination to pursue a dark path backward among the Hathornes to whom he felt so close in gravity and pride and guilt.

The house where he was born, on Union Street, had been built by his grandfather Daniel. “The old household estate,” says Hawthorne, “was in another part of the town, and had descended in the family ever since the settlement of the country; but this old man of the sea exchanged it

for a lot of land situated near the wharves, and convenient to his business." Daniel's business was with the sea, as Hawthorne thought his own would have been had he not become a writer; he had a chronic dislike of living inland. But Daniel's business had not prospered to the extent of furnishing him with one of the fine houses for which Salem is still distinguished. Union Street is a modest street, as is Herbert Street behind it, where Hawthorne lived next. Nor had the elder Nathaniel prospered, even in those best days of Salem during which his son was born. They can be seen as romantic days, though the son never saw them thus. The Salem he knew in his maturity was already decayed, and the wharves rotted. The romance he found was of another century, another sort. As for the Salem he saw with his own eyes—"joyless" he calls it, with a "chill east wind" and the "chilliest of social atmospheres."

In 1808, when Hawthorne was four, his mother called him from the room where he was playing and told him that his father had died of a fever in Surinam. Not long after this she moved with him and his two sisters back into the house on Herbert Street, a house almost adjoining her own, whence she had come as a bride in 1801. One sister, Elizabeth, was two years older than Nathaniel, but the other one, Maria Louisa, had been born in this year of her father's death. Both of them were to remain important in Hawthorne's life. Elizabeth, the wittier of the two, and perhaps the brainier, is said to have resembled him the more, but Louisa was probably his favorite. She was humorous, she was affectionate, she was simple, she was sociable—though as things turned out, there was to be little room in her career for the exhibition of such gifts.

The Manning house on Herbert Street was already full

of people. Hawthorne, describing it in 1853, calls it "a tall, ugly, old, grayish building, now the residence of half a dozen Irish families." In 1808, according to the reminiscences of Elizabeth, it was inhabited by "our Grandfather and Grandmother Manning" and by "four Uncles and four Aunts, all, for many years, unmarried, so that we were welcome in the family." A visitor in those days remembers it as "a cheerless home. The rooms had but little furniture of the plainest kind. No carpets or curtains. Mrs. Hawthorne and her family lived upstairs, practicing the greatest economy by taking their meals up there."

But it is much to say for the Mannings that they took the Hawthornes in; the captain who died at twenty-six in Surinam had left his widow with few means. And all of the evidence goes to show that the Mannings were more than just; they were kind, says Elizabeth, and indulgent; they even spoiled their charges. The aunts were Mary, Maria, and Priscilla. The uncles were William, Robert, John, and Samuel. Still another uncle, Richard, lived in Raymond, Maine, where he had built a house in 1800 which because of its imposing size bore the name "Manning's Folly." It is interesting that the captain's widow had not turned to his own family for help. Two of the Hawthorne sisters were well-married; one was now a Crowninshield and one a Forrester—both better names, and richer, than either Hawthorne or Manning. But they were ignored, so that the boy Nathaniel grew up under no influences from his father's side.

As a child, says Elizabeth, he was "both beautiful and bright." He was "particularly petted, the more because his health was then delicate and he had frequent illnesses." Most of his days were spent of course in the company of



women; yet his uncles were by no means without interest in him. William, the eldest, ran the Salem and Boston Stage Coach Company, in whose offices Nathaniel was later to keep books. Robert, an agent of the company and a broker in Salem, was the closest to him of the four; he took charge of his education, paid for it, accompanied him to college, and in general was the best substitute he ever found for the father he had lost. If he sometimes suspected that the "uniform kindness" with which he was treated—the phrase is from the autobiographical "Journal of a Solitary Man" which he printed in 1837—was kindness and not love, he was doing no more than adopted sons regularly do.

His mother has long been the subject of a sentimental legend which no evidence supports. She is supposed, soon after her husband's death, to have shut herself away not only from the world but from the Mannings and her own children. There are hints of a darkened room where she takes her meals alone, says nothing, and mourns "in a Hindoo seclusion" the irreparable sadness of her lot. It appears on the contrary that she was an excellent cook, an attentive mother, and an interesting talker about things past and present. Her son's childhood letters to her, a number of which survive, are addressed to no such awful stranger as the legend suggests. They are familiar, they are funny, they refer to experiences mother and son have shared; they are even impertinent at times, as the letters of any bright boy may be. It is true that when she lay dying in 1849 he wrote in his note-book: "I love my mother; but there has been, ever since my boyhood, a sort of coldness of intercourse between us, such as is apt to come between persons of strong feelings, if they are not managed rightly." But that is another story and it refers to later years; nor

does it deny a society so much as imply one. It is also true that Madame Hathorne, as she was subsequently called, became an invalid after twenty years in the Manning house, and so was seen less often by her son and daughters. But no legend is needed to explain that. Nor could it have been a curtained recluse who planned with Mary Manning to buy a small farm in Bridgton, Maine, in 1814, so that the Hathorne children could have a place of their own; a place, furthermore, where she would have duties as regarded them. Never able to afford the purchase, she remained with them in Salem.

Hawthorne started to school at seven with Joseph E. Worcester, a recent graduate of Yale and in subsequent years a famous lexicographer, but later on he minimized the importance of his having done so. "One of the peculiarities of my boyhood," he said, "was a grievous disinclination to go to school, and (Providence favoring me in this natural repugnance) I never did go half as much as other boys, partly owing to delicate health (which I made the most of for the purpose), and partly because, much of the time, there were no schools within reach." It is difficult to know just how delicate his health was in these early years. At nine, playing ball, he injured his foot, and so for the next three years was pretty much confined to the house, where he either walked on crutches or lay playing with cats—he was always devoted to cats—and reading. Elizabeth, who remembers still another illness which lost him "the use of his limbs," reports that he had read *The Pilgrim's Progress* at six. Now he read Shakespeare, *The Faerie Queene*, Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, and whatever else was available. Doubtless his health was delicate, yet doubtless too he made the most of it as he admits, being

a beautiful, bright boy who was not a little spoiled, and carrying in him even then the seeds of that graceful indolence which was always to flourish in his body and his mind.

"When I was eight or nine years old," he said in 1853, "my mother, with her three children, took up her residence on the banks of the Sebago Lake, in Maine, where the family owned a large tract of land; and here I ran quite wild, and would, I doubt not, have willingly run wild till this time, fishing all day long, or shooting with an old fowling-piece; but reading a good deal, too, on the rainy days, especially in Shakespeare and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and any poetry or light books within my reach. Those were delightful days; for that part of the country was wild then, with only scattered clearings, and nine tenths of it primeval woods."

The place was Raymond, and the house was one which Uncle Robert had built for himself across the road from "Manning's Folly." It is not quite true that the Hawthorne family took up residence there when Nathaniel was eight or nine. He spent some part of every year in Raymond until he was twenty-one, but the first full summer of which we hear is the summer of 1816, and it was not until 1818 that all of them went there as "permanent residents," to use Elizabeth's term, in a house which Robert had built especially for them. Even then there was much coming and going between Raymond and Salem, particularly on the part of the children; Hawthorne himself, returning in 1819 to prepare for college, considered himself thenceforth an exile from the place.

It had great charms for him—more, even, than he has recorded. These may not have included the school he went

to in Stroudwater, a neighboring town where the Reverend Caleb Bradley, recently out of Harvard, had set up as teacher, but we can be sure they included the long walks he took—even before he had recovered from his lameness—alone or with Elizabeth, around Sebago by summer and across its ice by winter. Elizabeth remembers also how much he enjoyed himself when a barn burned one night in Stroudwater, close to the school. “All his life,” she says, “he enjoyed a fire. . . . In Salem, he always went out when there was a fire; once or twice he was deluded by a false alarm; and after that he used to send me up to the top of the house to see if there was really a fire, and if it was well under weigh, before he got up.”

Three boys of the neighborhood became his particular friends: Robinson Cook, Jacob Dingley, and William Symmes. Symmes, a mulatto, was the natural son of a Massachusetts lawyer who gave him his name but died when he was two years old. The boy came then to Maine as the foster son of Captain Jonathan Button, a friend of Richard Manning. Thus he met Hawthorne, whom he later set down as the only white boy never to injure his feelings because he was colored. Hawthorne always remembered him, he said. “Once, after he graduated, he came on board a vessel in Salem harbor and stayed with me two hours. I was then before the mast. . . . The last time I saw him we were in Liverpool; he recognized me across the street, and ‘hove me to.’ We had a long talk, and he conversed in that easy, bewitching style, of which he was perfect master when he pleased.” He did not often please.

Symmes may be the author of a diary which he published as Hawthorne’s in the *Portland Transcript* between 1871 and 1873. It would be pleasant to believe that Haw-

thorne did keep this diary at Raymond, in a blank book his Uncle Richard had given him; for then we should have the first of his several note-books, and indeed it would be worthy of that company, since its pages are as clear-eyed, as intelligent, as amusing, as skeptical, and as natural as Hawthorne himself ever was. But it cannot be settled for certain that Symmes did not forge the document—itself an impressive feat. The following paragraph is perfectly in Hawthorne's character, supposing he had that character at fourteen or fifteen:

“A pedler named Dominicus Jordan was today in Uncle Richard's store, telling a ghost story. I listened intently, but tried not to seem interested. The story was of a house, the owner of which was suddenly killed. Since his death the west garret-window cannot be kept closed; though the shutters be hasped and nailed at night, they are invariably found open the next morning, and no one can tell when or how the nails were drawn. There is also on the farm an apple-tree, the fruit of which the owner was particularly fond of, but since his death no one has been able to get one of the apples. The tree hangs full nearly every year, but whenever any individual tries to get one, stones come in all directions as if from some secret infernal battery, or hidden catapult, and more than once have those making the attempts been struck. . . . Jordan says that it seems odd to strangers to see that tree loaded with apples when the snow is four feet deep; and, what is a mystery, there are no apples in the spring. . . . He further says, that late one starlight night he was passing the house, and looking up saw the phantom walk out of the garret with cane in hand, making all the motions as if walking on *terra firma*, although what appeared to be his feet were at least six

yards from the ground; and so he went walking away on nothing, and when nearly out of sight there was a great flash and an explosion as of twenty field-pieces, then—nothing. This story was told with seeming earnestness, and listened to as though it was believed. How strange it is that almost all persons, old or young, are fond of hearing about the supernatural, though it produces nervousness and fear! I should not be willing to sleep in that garret, though I do not believe a word of the story.”

For all the world here is Hawthorne of the romances, supplying his reader with marvels for which he rejects any personal responsibility.

“By and by,” says Hawthorne himself in a later year, “my good mother began to think it was necessary for her boy to do something else; so I was sent back to Salem, where a private instructor fitted me for college.” This was in the summer of 1819, but preparation for college did not begin at once. In July he was at school at “Mr. Archer’s on Marlbro St.,” and feeling a great homesickness for Raymond. Keeping his Uncle William’s ledger for a dollar a week did not help him forget the lake and the black bears. “I do not know what to do with myself here,” he writes Louisa. “I wish I was in Raymond, and I should be happy. . . . I have read *Waverley*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom*, *Roderick Random*, and the first volume of *The Arabian Nights*.

Oh, earthly pomp is but a dream,  
And like a meteor’s short-lived gleam;  
And all the sons of glory soon  
Will rest beneath the mould’ring stone.  
And Genius is a star whose light  
Is soon to sink in endless night,

And heavenly beauty's angel form  
Will bend like flower in winter's storm.

Though those are my rhymes, yet they are not exactly my thoughts. I am full of scraps of poetry; can't keep it out of my brain."

"The happiest days of my life are gone," he writes his mother on March 7, 1820. "Why was I not a girl that I might have been pinned all my life to my mother's apron?" His mother was still in Raymond, but Louisa was back in Salem with him—good-natured Louisa, who never complained as her brother and sister sometimes did of having to live with relatives. In August and September of this year she was assisting Nathaniel with *The Spectator*, a little publication they wrote by hand and circulated chiefly to each other. It contained poems and essays on Solitude and kindred subjects.

The juvenile verses of Hawthorne have no interest for us now, and may have had little interest for him then—in the days of *The Spectator* and before, or later on in college. Though he larded his letters with them, his comments on himself as poet were not respectful. This could have been the protective device every beginning poet adopts, but it was probably his true belief, for even so early he was making no mistakes about himself. Hawthorne was not a poet, or at least he was none in verse. The author of *The Scarlet Letter* is a great poet of some sort, and indeed the important sort, but that same man was convinced all his life that the thing ordinarily known as poetry is "nonsense," "a sort of vague reverie called thought," or at best "a delicate and dewy flower" dedicated to pale dreams and "unworldly beauty." "I am not a man of metre," he wrote

Lewis Mansfield in 1850, seventeen days after finishing *The Scarlet Letter*. He might have added that he had no ear for music. He preferred the "unmeasured poetry" of prose—as Dryden once put it, the "other harmony." Given his genius, he was altogether right.

By March 1820, he was reciting Latin and other lessons to Benjamin L. Oliver, a Salem lawyer, in preparation for Bowdoin College, where the curriculum was like Harvard's but where the tuition was only eight dollars a term. A Crowninshield, a Frothingham, a Bowditch, would have gone of course to Harvard, but not a Hawthorne-Manning. The fact that Bowdoin was in Maine, and not too far from Raymond, may have made some difference also. At any rate, bound for Bowdoin he was; and already he found himself perplexed by his inability to take any interest in the customary professions. "I do not want to be a doctor and live by men's diseases, nor a minister to live by their sins, nor a lawyer and live by their quarrels," he is said to have written his mother in a letter that does not survive. "So, I don't see that there is anything left for me but to be an author. How would you like some day to see a whole shelf full of books, written by your son, with 'Hawthorne's Works' printed on their backs?"

It is not difficult to believe that Hawthorne's thoughts of himself at sixteen as one who would be a writer—a writer or nothing at all—were long, long thoughts. Everything we know about him from this point on supports indeed the conclusion that he was braced in his mind against the most perilous career a young man of his time, or of any time, could deliberately choose.

Benjamin Oliver had to get him ready for a college which required candidates for admission "to write Latin



grammatically, and to be well versed in Geography, in Walsh's Arithmetic, Cicero's Select Orations, the Bucolics, Georgics, and the Aeneid of Virgil, Sallust, the Greek Testament, and the Collectanea Graeca Minora. They must present certificates of their good moral character." Hawthorne was not ready until the fall of 1821, when he set off in a stage coach with his Uncle Robert for Brunswick, Maine. According to Horatio Bridge, his best friend in college and one of the two best friends he ever had, the other of those two was a passenger in the coach by the time it reached its destination. This was Franklin Pierce, who had already spent a year at Bowdoin, and who was to become one of the least popular of American Presidents, though Hawthorne was never to understand or accept the judgment. With them rode also, says Bridge, Jonathan Cilley and Alfred Mason. Cilley was to enjoy a briefer career in politics than Pierce; Mason was to be Hawthorne's first room-mate.

"During the whole journey," Robert Manning wrote Madame Hawthorne in October, "he was doubtful. And after he returned from the President's he was positive he should not pass, and requested me to be ready to return immediately." Hawthorne, however, did pass the entrance examinations, and was installed at once in a room with Mason which the frontier frugality of Bowdoin had adorned with neither carpets, paint, nor wallpaper. "The civilities, discipline, and punctuality which the laws of the institution demand were irksome at first to him," Uncle Robert further informed the freshman's mother, who doubtless was not surprised, "but habit already began to have a very perceptible influence."

Hawthorne, whose tendency in talk was to take things

down, said later: "I was an idle student, negligent of college rules and the Procrustean details of academic life, rather choosing to nurse my own fancies than to dig into Greek roots and be numbered among the learned Thebans." This is too harsh a verdict, though it is true that "the handsomest young man of his day, in that part of the world," rather lounged than plunged through the studies of the next four years. "He took much greater interest," says Bridge, "in the humanities than in the more abstruse branches of the prescribed course. Mathematics and metaphysics, as studies, he disliked and neglected, to his frequent discredit in the recitation-room; but the languages were attractive and pleasant. Especially did he like the Latin, which he wrote with great ease and purity. In the other studies of the curriculum he stood hardly above mediocrity, and in declamation he was literally *nowhere*. He never declaimed in the old chapel, as the students were required to do on Wednesdays. Fines and admonitions were powerless. He would not declaim."

There were no electives at Bowdoin. Latin and Greek literature, English grammar and rhetoric, recitations from the Bible, arithmetic, geometry, surveying and navigation, conic sections and the "mensuration of superficies," chemistry, logic, natural philosophy and theology, spherical geometry and trigonometry, mineralogy, experimental philosophy, the philosophy of the mind, and declamation—always declamation—these were the prescriptions, and only a few of them were palatable to the graceful youth who spent so much of his time, says Bridge, in "miscellaneous reading." Hawthorne soon joined one of the two college literary societies, the Athenaeon, whose library contained eight hundred volumes—few of them, one supposes,

either mathematical or metaphysical. This was the "progressive or democratic" society, says Hawthorne in his biography of Franklin Pierce, not the "respectable conservative" one which Mason joined, and the next year Longfellow. Longfellow, whom Hawthorne seems not to have known particularly well at Bowdoin, belonged in the Peucinian Society because he was "finely dressed and a tremendous student," and "no more conscious of any earthly or spiritual trouble," Hawthorne thought later, "than a sunflower is."

Bridge, Pierce, and Cilley were Athenaeans with Hawthorne. That is to say, they considered themselves democrats; and in 1824, during Jackson's campaign, they were enthusiastic Democrats. None of them ever abandoned the party.

Taverns, idle shows, cards, billiards, liquor, tobacco, fireworks, shooting, and fishing were forbidden by the college rules except under conditions seldom likely to exist. Hawthorne broke many of these rules, as most of the students did. He was fined for card-playing and chapel-cutting, and it is clear that he frequented the taverns of the town—the Falstaff, the Pumpkin, and Ward's—somewhat as the hero of *Fanshawe*, his first novel, did. But he also escaped when he could into the country with Bridge to gather blueberries, watch logs come down the Androscoggin, shoot pigeons and squirrels, and angle for trout. With Bridge too he called several times upon Governor Russwurm, the only colored student of the college, who lived in "a carpenter's house, just beyond the village limits. . . . But his sensitiveness on account of his color prevented him from returning the calls."

Elizabeth was sure that her brother had definitely de-

cided to be an author while at Bowdoin. His English compositions were admired by students and teachers alike, but what is more to the professional point, Elizabeth speaks of a novel (not *Fanshawe*) and a collection called *Seven Tales of My Native Land*. Of the novel nothing survives, and of the tales it is uncertain what portions may have passed over into those which Hawthorne published later. It is not to be doubted, however, that he thought often in these days of a writing career. Distrustfully, too, says Bridge. "He insisted that he could never bring himself into accord with the general reading public, nor make himself anything more than a beggarly support as an author." The old problem, and he never wholly solved it.

He graduated in 1825, eighteenth in a class of thirty-eight, but denied any role in the commencement exercises "on account," he reported home, "of my neglect of Declamation." On July 14 he wrote to Elizabeth that he had been to Raymond. "I do not desire to return there again," he concluded. "Uncle Richard seemed to care nothing about us, and Mrs. Manning was as cold and freezing as a December morning."

So this part of his life was over, as was the part wherein he had thought about being an author more steadily than he had tried to be one. Now the trial was to commence in Salem. It is one of the longest trials on record, and one of the unhappiest.

The young man who undertook it was even then an enigma to those who at college had known him best. "I love Hawthorne," said Cilley; "I admire him; but I do not know him. He lives in a mysterious world of thought and imagination which he never permits me to enter." Others spoke of his "reserve," his "retirement," and his habit of sitting

with his head "gently inclined to one side," saying nothing. To Bridge he was always "manly, cool, self-poised, and brave. He was neither morose nor sentimental; and though taciturn, was invariably cheerful with his chosen friends. . . . His most marked characteristics were independence of thought and action; absolute truthfulness; loyalty to friends; abhorrence of debt; great physical as well as moral courage; and a high and delicate sense of honor. He shrank habitually from the exhibition of his own secret opinions."

His own secret opinions. We still do not know them, nor would it matter if we did. It is more important that we can watch him in his room at Salem during the next thirteen years as he continued to inhabit, and in some measure managed to subdue, the "mysterious world of thought and imagination" of which Cilley had spoken. .



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## This Dismal Chamber

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THERE can be as many accounts of the next thirteen years in Hawthorne's life as there are minds to make them. The truth about this time may be very simple, but it is hard to get at. Hawthorne was learning how to write stories; he was struggling to reconcile the peculiar nature of his thoughts and fancies with the taste of the period; he was trying to feel his native land as the "poetic or fairy precinct" which in his conviction was necessary for romance; he was discovering and ordering his own profound, somewhat obsessive, moral ideas; he was laboring to become known, and so to justify the profession he had chosen; he was having little success, and being discouraged—each of these propositions is true, yet none of them is complete. We might even pass over the period as one which for Henry James, as perhaps for anybody who considers it closely, "had an altogether peculiar dreariness." It cannot, however, be passed over. The period in which Hawthorne became what he was is necessarily interesting; nor was its tedium unrelieved.

Hawthorne himself, writing of it to Richard Henry Stoddard in 1853, was careful to take the dry tone he pre-

ferred whenever he talked about himself. "It was my fortune or misfortune, just as you please, to have some slender means of supporting myself; and so, on leaving college, in 1825, instead of immediately studying a profession, I sat myself down to consider what pursuit in life I was best fit for. My mother had now returned, and taken up her abode in her deceased father's house, . . . in which I had a room. And year after year I kept on considering what I was fit for, and time and my destiny decided that I was to be the writer that I am. I had always a natural tendency (it appears to have been on the paternal side) toward seclusion; and this I now indulged to the utmost, so that, for months together, I scarcely held human intercourse outside of my own family; seldom going out except at twilight, or only to take the nearest way to the most convenient solitude, which was oftenest the seashore—the rocks and beaches in that vicinity being as fine as any in New England. Once a year, or thereabouts, I used to make an excursion of a few weeks, in which I enjoyed as much of life as other people do in the whole year's round. Having spent so much of my boyhood and youth away from my native place, I had very few acquaintances in Salem, and during the nine or ten years that I spent there, in this solitary way, I doubt whether so much as twenty people in the town were aware of my existence. Meanwhile, strange as it may seem, I had lived a very tolerable life, always seemed cheerful, and enjoyed the very best bodily health. I had read endlessly all sorts of good and good-for-nothing books, and, in the dearth of other employment, had early begun to scribble sketches and stories, most of which I burned."

There is nothing here about the excitement of discovering after a few years that he could write "Young Goodman



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Brown," or even think through the moral drama which informs it. There is nothing about the pleasure he must have taken in being able, at least as early as 1830, to tell himself: I have a style at my command, I can feel and hear it, I can make others feel and hear it, whenever I make the proper effort. There is nothing about the craftsman's hours he spent in reading many novels and in making, says Elizabeth, "an artistic study of them." There is nothing about one of the very good reasons he may have had for shutting himself up and working as hard as he could: his uncles, doubting the wisdom of his ways, had as soon as possible to be convinced.

Nor is there any inkling of the bitterness he felt because success came so slowly. Hawthorne may never have burned with ambition, but in his fashion he knew what it was to have dreams of undying fame—his own words, used more than once of the young men he wrote about. Except for one tale in the *Salem Gazette* and a novel printed at his own expense but immediately recalled from circulation, it was five years before he was published at all, and eleven years before he was reviewed by name—this last being true, to be sure, for the reason that he so perversely, or else so cautiously, insisted upon anonymity until then. Bitterness is not too harsh a term for the feeling Hawthorne had in the face of a failure which, be it granted, he always referred to with genial exaggeration. But this was after the success of *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850. In 1851, dedicating *The Snow-Image* to Bridge, he inquired of his friend in public: "Was there ever such a weary delay in obtaining the slightest recognition from the public, as in my case? I sat down by the wayside of life, like a man under enchantment, and a shrubbery sprang up around me, and the bushes grew to be

saplings, and the saplings became trees, until no exit appeared possible, through the entangling depths of my obscurity." And in the same year, writing the preface to his new edition of *Twice-Told Tales*, he recalled having been, "for a good many years, the obscurest man of letters in America. These stories were published in magazines and annuals, extending over a period of ten or twelve years, and comprising the whole of the writer's young manhood, without making (so far as he has ever been aware) the slightest impression on the public. . . . He had no incitement to literary effort in a reasonable prospect of reputation or profit, nothing but the pleasure itself of composition—an enjoyment not at all amiss in its way, and perhaps essential to the merit of the work in hand, but which, in the long run, will hardly keep the chill out of a writer's heart, or the numbness out of his fingers." He could go on as he did to deny that he had ever been "greatly tormented by literary ambition," and to assure himself that the years in question had after all been "very tranquil and not unhappy." But this again was in 1851.

Neither, in the memorandum to Stoddard, is there emphasis upon the morbid character he elsewhere assigns to his conduct in this period. He must have been thinking of himself when in 1837 he wrote of Peter Goldthwaite: "His brief glimpse into the street had given him a forcible impression of the manner in which the world kept itself cheerful and prosperous, by social pleasures and an intercourse of business, while he, in seclusion, was pursuing an object that might possibly be a phantasm, by a method which most people would call madness." He may have remembered his chamber under the eaves when he discoursed so eloquently, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, concerning Hepzibah's

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"dry rot." "I was like a person," he once remarked, "talking to himself in a dark room." And the worst of it was that he had to keep wondering whether he had any license to do so. It was not merely that no Hawthorne before him had been content to become "a writer of story-books." It was rather indeed that "I, being heir to a moderate competence, had avowed my purpose of keeping aloof from the regular business of life. This would have been a dangerous resolution anywhere in the world; it was fatal in New England." Little or nothing in the America of his day supported him in the conviction that it might be part of the "regular business of life" for someone, if not of course everyone, to withdraw for a period of years and dedicate his days to the study of an art. Hawthorne could never quite rid himself of a guilty suspicion that he was wasting both his own and the world's time; there was something owlsh, something awful, something sickly, about the way he lived. Or so he sometimes said.

However all this was, Hawthorne did settle down in Herbert Street to master an art if he could; and there were days when he could congratulate himself upon the privacy he had. "That man has little right to complain," runs a passage in *Fanshawe* on the subject of Dr. Melmoth's study, "who possesses so much as one corner in the world where he may be happy or miserable, as best suits him. . . . The flight of time was here as swift as the wind, and noiseless as the snowflake; and it was a sure proof of real happiness that night often came upon the student before he knew it was midday." We should know a great deal more than we do if Bridge had not obeyed his friend and burned every letter that came to him from Herbert Street during the decade after college. Some of these letters were certainly

gloomy; others were not. Elizabeth and Louisa, and doubtless Madame Hawthorne, seem to have been respectful of the regimen Hawthorne had imposed upon himself. Elizabeth, indeed, reports that "we were in those days almost absolutely obedient to him." He was always to be skilful in making others contribute to his comfort, and this without losing any of their love. "His habits," says Elizabeth, "were as regular as possible. In the evening after tea he went out for about an hour, whatever the weather was; and in winter, after his return, he ate a pint bowl of thick chocolate (not cocoa, but the old-fashioned chocolate) crumbed full of bread."

But it is not to be supposed that he was a prisoner in his room. Setting aside for a moment the matter of his summer trips away from Salem—trips that not merely refreshed him when he needed change, but tested for him the theory that instead of ripening into the tragic poet he threatened to become he ought to aim at being a Chaucer, a Cervantes, or someone else who wrote brightly, lightly, wisely, and sanely about every human object under the sun—there was occasional employment in the stage office of his uncles, and there was Salem itself; that is to say, there was the "strange, indolent, unjoyous attachment" to his native town which so puzzled him whenever he thought about it. He never assented to Salem, but as Henry James observes, there is "mingled tenderness and rancor" in every mention of it he makes.

The Salem of 1825 was not living in the past. If its greatest days were over, few of its citizens understood that this was so. Young men still listened to their neighbors' tales of faraway ports and waters, and the officers of the Custom House inspected cargoes of ivory and silk, of spices and

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gums and tea. There were stately houses on Essex and Chestnut Streets where life went on in a sort of splendor, a decorous and responsible splendor, not inconsistent with the hospitality soon to be shown there toward the Unitarianism and the Transcendentalism that were coming.

But Hawthorne was never to be a Unitarian or a Transcendentalist. He was to go with no fashion in religion or philosophy, just as he was never to repudiate the political party to which in college, along with Pierce and Cilley, he had given his sympathy. Respectable Salem was not Democratic. All of which is to say that Hawthorne's attachment to the town was neither to its respectability nor to its splendor. If the Hawthornes were an old family, they were not by this time a family that was recognized. They lived in the backyard of the aristocracy, in a poverty, says Henry James with characteristic and inimitable scruple, "that one almost hesitates to look into." But the last thing Hawthorne's poverty did was to make him humble. The Salem he saw was everybody's Salem, a gray, monotonous rock to which he clung with the "oyster-like tenacity" of any old settler at all. The people of his local sketches are ordinary people, with neither names nor faces. He was never to be comfortable with extraordinary persons of any sort, just as he was never to go to church or into society, or into the circles of the new philosophy. There was in this some leaning backward, some perversity and sullenness of emphasis, though he did not confess it except vicariously. He confessed it once through Hepzibah Pyncheon, when he found in her "that feeling of hostility which is the only real abasement of the poor in the presence of the rich."

Nor did he escape, except as artist and romancer, into the old colony days when Liberty was an iron cage—his

words in "Main Street"—and "the only boon companion was Death." The Salem he lived in was the Salem he saw with always something sour in even his most affectionate glances. It was the Salem of his own immediate family, of the Mannings, and of a few good friends like William B. Pike, the son of a carpenter, David Roberts, the son of a mechanic, and Horace Conolly, the less likable hanger-on and heir of his distant cousin Susan Ingersoll. It was the Salem, finally, where humanity exhibited itself as it does, necessarily and simply, everywhere. "If there was any gathering of people in the town," says Elizabeth, "he always went out; he liked a crowd. When General Jackson, of whom he professed himself a partisan, visited Salem, in 1833, he walked out to the boundaries of the town to meet him, not to speak to him—only to look at him; and found only a few men and boys collected, not enough, without the assistance that he rendered, to welcome the General with a good cheer. It is hard to fancy him doing such a thing as shouting."

Or Salem, to put the matter in its bleakest terms, was merely the place where Hawthorne was learning how to compose stories, and when the stories were bad, to burn them. "It was only after his return to Salem," says Elizabeth, "and when he felt as if he could not get away from there and yet was conscious of being utterly unlike everyone else in the place, that he began to withdraw into himself." But he was withdrawing to write, not to contemplate himself. And he soon made enough headway to convince himself that he had a small volume ready for publication—the *Seven Tales of My Native Land*, some portions of which he may have brought with him from Bowdoin. This collection, like two others he projected, *Provincial Tales*

and *The Story-Teller*, was never to see print in the form he imagined. Bridge says that *Seven Tales*, after a long series of excuses on the part of the printer who was to bring it out, was recalled by Hawthorne and burned "in a mood half savage, half despairing." It was in the same mood that he demanded stories back from magazines which delayed publishing them and, according to Elizabeth, "put them in the fire." He is also reported to have destroyed certain powerful pieces because they were "morbid." If he made progress, there was nothing smooth about the path.

Meanwhile he continued to read in the same way that he had read as a boy and as a student, without responsibility to anything beyond his own desires and his creative purposes. Elizabeth says he rejected any book upon the recommendation that it was either useful or true; so that the *Newgate Calendar*, which he had devoured by fourteen, could have been nothing but romance to him. "After he left college," she continues, "he depended for books primarily upon the Salem Athenaeum and a circulating library, the latter of which supplied him with most of the novels then published. The Athenaeum was very defective; and it was one of my brother's peculiarities that he never would visit it himself, nor look over the catalogue to select a book, nor indeed do anything but find fault with it; so that it was left entirely to me to provide him with reading." She lists *The Gentleman's Magazine*, "containing many curious things," and six volumes, folio, of Howell's *State Trials*, along with "much that related to the early history of New England" and—though "he was not very fond of history in general"—Froissart and Clarendon. He also had her bring him "such French books as the library contained," chiefly Voltaire's and Rousseau's.

Books were important to Hawthorne as they are to any writer, yet it would be impossible to compose a picture of him out of those he went through sometimes eagerly, sometimes idly. In later years he read aloud to his wife and children, on their own testimony, all of Shakespeare and Scott as well as portions of Milton, Pope, Dickens, and Southey. He knew Shakespeare well, and Dante and Spenser and Bunyan—particularly Bunyan, whose *Pilgrim's Progress* he names and uses in his own pages more than any book. *Don Quixote*, however, was one of his favorites too. Dapple and Rosinante, not to speak of their immortal riders through the world, were often in his mind, which was half a comic mind. What he called the "profound, pathetic humor" of Cervantes was as precious to him as anything he knew. He liked few things better than to imagine "two knights-errant" wandering off together: Fanshawe and Dr. Melmoth, Kenyon and Donatello, the "Story-teller" and his friend, or—it may be—himself and Ticknor in those latter days when poet and publisher took the same train to Washington, the same boat to Liverpool. Only an attentive and loving reader of *Don Quixote* would have remembered suddenly, as Hawthorne does in *Our Old Home*, "Sancho Panza's dip out of Camacho's caldron." Such items are cherished by those readers of Cervantes who miss nothing in his universe.

It never ceases to be surprising that Hawthorne knew as well as he did certain English authors of the eighteenth century—never, unless one remembers his Augustan style; which "is, in fact," says Hawthorne himself, "the style of a man of society," with none of the obscurity and eccentricity that would be there if his narratives were "the written communications of a solitary mind with itself." He



admired Franklin, Fielding, and Pope; he knew Swift through and through—Lilliput, Laputa, and the Struldbrugs, not to mention Partridge and the Houyhnhnms. But Dr. Johnson was the chief of these. Near the end of his life, in *Our Old Home*, Hawthorne recalls how at an early age the figure of Boswell's Johnson had been as familiar and vivid to him as that of his own grandfather. "It was as a man, a talker, and a humorist, that I knew and loved him. . . . I laughed at him, sometimes, standing by his knee. And yet, considering that my native propensities were towards Fairy Land, and also how much yeast is generally mixed up with the mental sustenance of a New Englander, it may not have been altogether amiss, in those childish and boyish days, to keep pace with this heavy-footed traveller, and feed on the gross diet that he carried in his knapsack." He does not mention the moment in Boswell that was crucial for him first and last: the public confession in the market-place at Uttoxeter, when Johnson bared his head among the crowd and spoke of a sin he had once committed against his father. Hawthorne himself was to tell this story publicly three times: in the *Biographical Stories for Children* of 1842, in *The Scarlet Letter*, and in *Our Old Home*. But as early as 1838 he was to write in his private note-book: "Dr. Johnson's penance in Uttoxeter Market. A man who does penance in what might appear to lookers-on the most glorious and triumphal circumstance of his life. Each circumstance of the career of an apparently successful man to be a penance and torture to him on account of some fundamental error in early life." That man would be Arthur Dimmesdale.

Dickens, Thackeray, and after 1860 Anthony Trollope—these in different degrees may be surprising; but it is most

natural that Hawthorne should have been addicted to Scott, from whom he learned, as so many of his contemporaries did, not only how to feel history but how to light it and make it eloquent for others. *Seven Tales of My Native Land*—the title itself is odorous of Scott; but so are the grouped personages, the dusky scenes, the lofty orations of Hawthorne's ancient New Englanders in some of the earliest tales he put together. Not that New England itself lacked an old historian who could be used, a Holinshed over whose pages Hawthorne could pore. "The Magnalia," says the grandfather in *Grandfather's Chair*, "is a strange, pedantic history, in which true events and real personages move before the reader with the dreamy aspect which they wore in Cotton Mather's singular mind." Hawthorne never lost an occasion to damn the narrowness of Mather's soul, but many of his historical tales are a tribute to the broad record this dreamy intellect had left of none too dreamy Massachusetts long ago.

About the gothic romances he devoured there can of course be no surprise. John Neal and Charles Brockden Brown in America, and in England William Godwin, Mrs. Radcliffe, Horace Walpole, and Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*—he went through them all, nor afterward was free of their controlling symbols: the mysterious portrait, the moldy parchment, the deformed villain, the secret crime, the illicit elixir, the esoteric research, the devil's laugh, the gleaming eye, the portentous word. He was seldom free enough of these contraptions; at the end, indeed, when his powers were failing, he fell back into them as into a pit. But at his best he made them serve him willingly and well; he forced them, that is, to do moral and metaphysical work. Godwin and Brown had done this before him, but at

nowhere near the same natural depth. Witchcraft for Hawthorne was a state of the soul, as was the ambition in many of his heroes to do with nature, especially human nature, more than man can do. The gothic novels of the age were mostly trash, and bits of the trash remain in him; but it is his distinction that he so often transformed it into something serious, beautiful, and humane. It is also his distinction that in several instances he was completely successful in localizing its symbols. His *House of the Seven Gables*, it has been properly remarked, is the nearest thing in American fiction to the castle of a preposterous tradition.

The trial romance he sent forth in 1828, however—sent forth, reconsidered, and immediately recalled—was not successful in this way. *Fanshawe*, which he paid Marsh & Capen of Boston a hundred dollars to publish, labored to domesticate Scott and Maturin, not to speak of Godwin and some others, in the one portion of America, outside of Salem and Raymond, that Hawthorne can be said at this age to have known. The scene is Harley College, his name for Bowdoin. But the people and the events are such as never existed save in second-rate romance. The best of the book is from Scott, who was not second-rate. A certain humor in the setting—in Hugh Crombie's tavern, and in the other-worldliness of Dr. Melmoth, head of Harley—is now the only tolerable thing about the tale. But it is barely tolerable. With the remainder—with for instance the three principals: Fanshawe the hero, Ellen Langton the heroine, and Butler the villain—no modern reader will have any more to do than Hawthorne would have when, scanning his pages in cold print, he began a search for every copy that was out, including the one he had given Elizabeth. "And no doubt burned it," says Elizabeth. "We were en-

joined," she adds, "to keep the authorship a profound secret, and of course we did." There had been no name on the title-page; and so successful was the suppression that not until after Hawthorne's death could a copy be discovered for reissue.

Fanshawe is a fabulous student, doomed to an early death because he is "a solitary being" who is "unconnected with the world, unconcerned in its feelings, and uninfluenced by it in any of his pursuits." Hawthorne has found here his arch-theme, but at the moment he does not know what to do with it. In later years, in certain years indeed that are soon to come, he will embroider and re-embroider this idea, this figure, with marvelous ingenuity. But Fanshawe has no life. The love for Ellen that promises to connect him with the world triumphs, to be sure, over the "irrecoverably ruined and irreclaimably depraved" Butler whose dark face and paralyzing glance show him to have been for a period of at least two years the inhabitant "of a foreign country"; yet it remains possible for him to hand her over at the end, in a paragraph perhaps unparalleled for narrative ineptitude, to his friend and fellow-student Edward Walcott. "When you hear that I am in my grave," he tells her, "do not imagine you have hastened me thither. Think that you have scattered bright dreams around my pathway—an ideal happiness, that you would have sacrificed your own to realize." Then comes the paragraph:

"He ceased; and Ellen felt that his determination was unalterable. She could not speak; but, taking his hand, she pressed it to her lips, and they saw each other no more. Mr. Langton and his daughter shortly after returned to the seaport which, for several succeeding years, was their residence."

## *This Dismal Chamber*

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Fanshawe—the boy Faust whom Hawthorne cannot decide whether to offer in this pale form for our melancholy admiration or for our judgment that his way of life, so self-centered and remote, is a grave instance of moral error—will reappear in many another work. There is even something of Hawthorne in him: not the natural young man, perhaps, whom Bridge and others found so competent, so cool, so poised, but the apprentice “craftsman of the soul” (his own words later on) whom circumstances both personal and literary have set thus early in a fixed mode of contemplation. The object of his contemplation is to be, sometimes indeed with wearisome insistence, such a person as Fanshawe was when he gave his life to studies for which no human purpose was known and from which no human good could result. But the figure will seldom be so feeble again. And, strangely enough, two of its most effective specimens, Roger Malvin and Young Goodman Brown, are even now visible in the procession.

In the year of *Fanshawe* Hawthorne moved with his mother and sisters into a house on Dearborn Street which Robert Manning had built for them next door to one of his own. They were to remain four years in this house before returning to Herbert Street—Madame Hawthorne to an invalid's life and her son to a career which had in no sense been interrupted by the change of scene. Some of his best tales, in fact, had come into existence away from “this dismal chamber” to which nevertheless he returned with mingled fascination and regret.

In the same year, 1828, we learn of his being in New Haven, Connecticut, on a trip with his Uncle Samuel. It seems to have been here that he first met Horace Conolly, the fantastic, scandalmongering, absurd, and humorless

bore whom he was always to list among his least certain friends. A little later we are to hear of Hawthorne and Louisa playing cards in Salem with Conolly and David Roberts; Louisa is the Empress of the set, Nathaniel the Emperor, Roberts the Chancellor, and Conolly the Cardinal. But of this day in New Haven we have a report by Conolly, who describes Hawthorne as "slim and very tall—in walking he carried his head a little to the left, with a decided swing of his right arm. . . . In conversation there was oftentimes a constraint, or hesitation, as if it required some extra exertion of the organs of the throat to bring out the voice." He swore much, denounced the Judges' Cave on West Rock as a "humbug," and dismissed New Haven generally as "a dismal hole." This sounds so much like what he said about every other place in which he subsequently found himself—notably Liverpool—that we may credit the report; though we may suppose at the same time that the sullen fellow Conolly remembers was merely one stranger exhibiting his distaste for another. Hawthorne could be very disagreeable; but so could Conolly, and Hawthorne was sure of this in 1850 when he learned that the Cardinal had helped to remove him from the Custom House in Salem. "You have been slandering and backbiting and stabbing me in the back for years past," Conolly says Hawthorne wrote him on that occasion. Even then, however, a certain amused contempt could mitigate the bitterness at last expressed. "You are a kind of pet serpent and must be allowed to bite."

The trip to New Haven was followed by another one to the same town in 1829, and for several years to come it was the annual practice of Hawthorne to ride off in summer, with Samuel or another of his uncles, through the

New England States. In 1830, at Stamford, Connecticut, he encountered the persons whom we find him recalling with such charm in "The Seven Vagabonds." In 1831 he was in New Hampshire, whence he wrote to Louisa and others that the Shakers at Canterbury had so interested him that he thought seriously—just how seriously it is now impossible to say—"about becoming a member of the Society." His interest was at least of the sort that produced two excellent tales, "The Canterbury Pilgrims" and "The Shaker Bridal." The next year he was in New Hampshire again, but farther north, among the White Mountains, where he gathered ideas for two sketches, "The Notch of the White Mountains" and "Our Evening Party Among the Mountains," and for two of his most important stories, "The Ambitious Guest" and "The Great Carbuncle." It is not certain just when he traveled west to Ticonderoga, Burlington, Lake Ontario, the Erie Canal, Rochester, and Niagara, though sketches survive to show that he visited those places. In the summer of 1833, at Swampscott, Massachusetts, he fell more or less in love with a fisherman's daughter whom according to Elizabeth he celebrated as Susan in "The Village Uncle." "He called her the Mermaid and was perpetually telling us how charming she was. . . . I should have feared that he was really in love with her if he had not talked so much about her; and besides, she was not the first one of whom I had heard." She was not the one, for instance, to whom it was rumored that he proposed marriage on Martha's Vineyard, where in one of these years he certainly went so that he could write "Chippings with a Chisel." Elizabeth says he visited Nantucket, too. In the summer of 1837 he spent five weeks with Bridge at Augusta, Maine; and in 1838 he was in western Massa-

chusetts, where he saw some persons who reappear in "Ethan Brand."

These summer trips were valuable to Hawthorne for the copy he made out of them, but doubtless they were necessary for another reason: they relieved the monotony of a lonely career which, even for one who could counsel patience as Hawthorne did in "Hints to Young Ambition" (1832), made little or no headway. The first sign of success we have is a letter of January 19, 1830, from Hartford, Connecticut. The writer was Samuel Griswold Goodrich, better known in years to come as "Peter Parley," a shrewd businessman of books who as editor of *The Token*, a popular annual, was to be Hawthorne's first publisher of note. Hawthorne, whose gratitude to Goodrich alternated with the feeling that he fed on his brain "as maggots . . . on rich cheese," had evidently been in correspondence with him before, in an attempt to find an outlet for the *Provincial Tales* he thought were now ready to be put forth. Goodrich in his *Recollections* says of Hawthorne in these days that he "was of a rather sturdy form, his hair dark and bushy, his eye steel-gray, his brow thick, his mouth sarcastic, his complexion stony, his whole aspect cold, moody, distrustful. He stood aloof, and surveyed the world from shy and sheltered positions." His tales, Goodrich thought as did John Pickering to whom he showed them, were "too mystical to be popular" in those years just before all New England turned mystical enough to constitute an audience for them. But now in 1830 Goodrich wrote: "I brought the MSS. which you sent me to this place, where I am spending a few weeks. I have read them with great pleasure. 'The Gentle Boy' and 'My Uncle Molineaux' I liked particularly; about 'Alice Doane' I should be more



doubtful as to the public approbation. On my return to Boston in April, I will use my influence to induce a publisher to take hold of the work who will give it a fair chance of success. Had *Fanshawe* been in the hands of more extensive dealers, I do believe it would have paid you a profit. As a practical evidence of my opinion of the uncommon merit of these tales, I offer you \$35 for the privilege of inserting 'The Gentle Boy' in the *Token*, and you shall be at liberty to publish it with your collection, provided it does not appear before the publication of the *Token*. In this case I shall return 'Roger Malvin's Burial.' "

In May of the same year Hawthorne notified Goodrich that he was sending two more tales, and in May of the following year a letter from Goodrich accepted four pieces for a single issue of his annual: "The Wives of the Dead," "Roger Malvin's Burial," "Major Molineaux," and "The Gentle Boy." "As they are anonymous," said Goodrich, "no objection arises from having so many pages by one author, particularly as they are as good, if not better, than anything else I get." "Sights from a Steeple" having appeared in the *Token* for 1831, these four for the issue of 1832, followed as they were in succeeding years by many others, set the foundation, such as it was, for Hawthorne's first fame. In January of 1832 he was offering further wares to Carey & Lea of Philadelphia, who published the *Souvenir*; and by 1833 he was entertaining the notion of a new collection to be called *The Story-Teller*.

*The Story-Teller* was to have a Chaucerian framework, of observation and relaxed commentary, of pleasantry and realism and wit, around and between the imagined narratives of Hawthorne's choice—some of these narratives, perhaps, being somber enough in his estimation to need relief

from the second vein of his talent which he valued quite as much as the vein out of which they had come. He never settled in his mind which vein represented him the better. One was deeper than the other, and on occasion terrifying; but its very depth made him distrust it, and its terrors were distinctly not to his liking. He was never to dig into himself for another *Scarlet Letter*. But *The Story-Teller* was doomed to go the way of *Seven Tales* and *Provincial Tales*. It did not appear as the unit Hawthorne had planned. Its contents instead were dumped as separate pieces into the pages of the *New England Magazine*, one of whose editors, Park Benjamin, had now no doubt of Hawthorne's genius. 1835 saw more tales and sketches of Hawthorne published than were ever again to appear in a single year; and when Park Benjamin moved from Boston to New York to edit the *American Monthly Magazine*, as much of *The Story-Teller* as he had not so far printed followed him there. These were the years in which Hawthorne's name first got to be known, discussed, and admired. But they were also years in which, for a variety of reasons, the discouragement he had originally felt ripened into something like disgust—with himself, with his art, and with the meager fashion in which that art was recompensed.

Two semi-autobiographical pieces which Benjamin published—"The Devil in Manuscript" in 1835 and "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man" in 1837—have regularly been taken, and properly so, as revelations of this disillusion, this rage. The "Oberon" of both tales is set forth with a protective humor of extravagance, but it is not hard to hear Hawthorne underneath. The first Oberon, explaining to a friend why he must burn all of his unpublished and unpublishable works, says in despair:

"You cannot conceive what an effect the composition of these tales has had on me. I have become ambitious of a bubble, and careless of solid reputation. I am surrounding myself with shadows, which bewilder me, by aping the realities of life. They have drawn me aside from the beaten path of the world, and led me into a strange sort of solitude—a solitude in the midst of men—where nobody wishes for what I do, nor thinks nor feels as I do. The tales have done all this. When they are ashes, perhaps I shall be as I was before they had existence. . . . I loathe the very thought of them, and actually experience a physical sickness of the stomach, whenever I glance at them on the table. . . . I have been eloquent and poetical and humorous in a dream—and behold! it is all nonsense, now that I am awake." The second Oberon is in a sense successful with his works, for they have found an audience as those of his predecessor had not. "No tales that have ever appeared in our popular journals have been so generally admired as his. But a sadness was on his spirit." "Merely skimming the surface of life," this Oberon confides to his journal, "I know nothing, by my own experience, of its deep and warm realities." Both heroes probably belong to the year 1834, when Hawthorne disposed of all the manuscripts he had on hand, to Benjamin and others, and rested for a while. He was so little satisfied with the grip his art had thus far taken on life that he not only wrote despondently to Bridge (as by now he had formed the habit of doing) but tried out another sort of composition altogether, one that he seems to have believed would save his work for sanity and human importance. His earliest known note-book dates from 1835.

The note-books of Hawthorne, ever since their posthumous publication by his widow, have been made much

of; and it is true that they are among his most interesting works. Running, with interruptions, through the quarter-century after 1835, they record an activity which might never have been guessed were it not for this evidence that it took place. His family has been accused of a desire to prove by them that Hawthorne was more "social and sunny" than his narratives would have him appear. But they had something like that purpose for himself. They were his causeway to "the world." Quicksilver in the *Wonder-Book* "evidently knew the world; and nobody is so charming to a young man as a friend who has that kind of knowledge." Hawthorne after a point—perhaps the present point—never ceased to hanker for more of "that kind of knowledge" than he thought he had. He had a good deal, but "the world" became an absolute for him, a fairyland of fact which he feared he was somehow self-prevented from exploring; and so he disciplined himself in observation of what in "The Hall of Fantasy" he called the "great, round, solid self" of earth and its people. His readers who wondered at the world where his imagination was at home could not have known how he in turn wondered at their world: at *the* world, as he ideally put it to himself. Had he as an artist been always able to believe that his own world was as real as anybody's, it might have become so more regularly than in the tales it is; and by the same token he might not have been afflicted by this nostalgia for the ordinary which is one of his most characteristic and touching notes.

He thought Dickens a good observer because of his "quick eyes," "sunny fancy," and "most genial heart," and doubtless he envied Dickens all those things. His own observation was of a cooler, slower sort, with something

dogged in the method and not a little acid in the outcome. His all too perfect candor spares, of course, no person or object including himself. In another society he might have been the novelist, not the romancer, which in the note-books he sometimes seems studious to become. In his own society, and being what he was, he could only indulge in secret a propensity for which he rarely found practical use.

The note-books, to be sure, were also a reservoir from which he could expect to draw matter for his romances; and as everybody knows, he did draw from them thus, often after years had passed. The conjecture of Henry James, that Hawthorne kept these books as an exercise in the art of writing about nothing, is as inadmissible as the theory would be that he kept them in order that he might not go mad. Among their several purposes, one was to help his fiction be more "real," but another was to preserve the countless ideas for stories which came, apparently in flocks, to amuse, bedevil, or obsess him as the case might be. Hawthorne never put his note-books to better use than when he recalled, particularly from their earliest pages, such items as this: "The strange sensation of a person who feels himself an object of deep interest, and close observation, and various construction of all his actions, by another person." Or this: "All the dead that had ever been drowned in a certain lake to rise." Or this: "A person to be the death of his beloved in trying to raise her to more than mortal perfection; yet this should be a comfort to him for having aimed so highly and holily." Or this: "Men of cold passions have quick eyes." Or this: "Selfishness is one of the qualities apt to inspire love. This might be thought out at great length." Or even this: "A whirlwind, whirling the dried leaves in a circle, not very violently."

He did himself less service, by and large, when he returned, as with the passage of time he increasingly did, to borrow from himself whole pages in the hope that he might warm them over without the labor of re-creating their original relevance. The note-books themselves, because their author has such a process in mind, grow more and more plodding, patient, and complete—even bored with themselves at times, or puzzled as to why they should exist. A certain joyful freshness disappears, as if Hawthorne had forgotten his first aim. His first aim had been to store his fire where he could get at it when he needed; his last aim was to provide a substitute for the fire. He began by making notes between periods of active composition; the notes themselves became at last an activity, hoping against hope to justify its own effort.

The researches that have been made into Hawthorne's use of his note-books have not always been guided by an understanding of the dangers latent in such use. It can be dangerous for any artist to hoard his dead thoughts as on occasion Hawthorne with a certain parsimony did. He went back in cold blood to copy some former self; and then he weakened the new work. Not always, of course, for there were times when he levied upon his past with the strength and confidence of genius. But he could lose as well as gain by shirking the excitements and agonies of invention, the hazards of what is felt at any rate as a new start. The deepest obligation of any artist is to be always advancing. "Bees are sometimes drowned in the honey which they collect," Hawthorne observes in 1842, "—so some writers lost in their collected learning." There are places in his work where the rule applies.

"In this dismal chamber FAME was won." With how

much mockery Hawthorne set these words down in his note-book for 1836, at a time when the magazines were full of his tales and notices of his work were beginning to appear, it would be difficult to say. In any case he left the chamber for six months of that same year to do hack work in Boston. With the help of Goodrich he had been made editor of the *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*, at a salary of five hundred dollars a year. The salary was so difficult to collect that he denounced his publishers, the Bewick Company, as "a damned sneaking set"; but he stayed on until the issue for August was prepared. He wrote Louisa in January: "I board at Thomas G. Fessenden's (Editor of the Farmer), No. 53 Hancock Street, and am pleasantly situated." He was responsible for the entire text of each issue, which meant that he made use of both his sisters whenever he grew desperate for copy. "Concoct, concoct," is the refrain in his letters back to Salem. Elizabeth was to ransack the Athenaeum for biographies, travel books, and volumes of natural history out of which she could clip and digest material for the press while Hawthorne made similar use of the Boston libraries. Louisa "concocted" too, but was more likely to be busy washing his clothes for him and sending them back—sometimes with manuscript in the bundle. In May, it appears from a letter to Elizabeth, Hawthorne was asked by Peter Parley, or Goodrich, to write nothing less than a *Universal History*. "It need not be superior in profundity or polish," he told her, "to the middling Magazine articles." It needed to be the merest trash, as brother and sister knew. She helped him with it, and it made Goodrich a great deal of money.

Hawthorne may have gone to Boston for money or to

see more of the world. In either case he was disappointed, and depression followed. The humiliation of an editorship which his friends congratulated him upon having, but which he knew from the start was but a vulgar travesty on the name, was something he could only half conceal by his usual method of banter, abuse, and self-depreciation. Bridge's letters to him after his return to Salem were answers to hopeless ones that had been received. About one of these, Bridge wrote in October, "there is a kind of desperate coolness . . . that seems dangerous. I fear that you are too good a subject for suicide, and that some day you will end your mortal woes on your own responsibility." Bridge argued manfully against Hawthorne's "blues," his "self-distrust" and his "misery," but with little effect. Another editorship that had seemed available fell through, and the time had not come—this was to be in the spring of 1837—when Pierce, at Bridge's suggestion, was to try at Washington to land for Hawthorne the post of historian on a South Seas exploring expedition.

Meanwhile Bridge was doing for his friend the one thing that would make a real difference in his life, and the friend did not know it. Bridge was corresponding with Goodrich about a collection of Hawthorne's tales for which Bridge would post a guaranty of \$250. The thing was done, the contract was closed, and in March, 1837 *Twice-Told Tales* appeared. This was the first book of which Hawthorne could be proud, if he was proud of anything he wrote, and its title page bore his name. Bridge, who dissuaded him from dedicating the book to Goodrich in the mistaken notion that Goodrich had made it possible, had in many a recent letter chided him for the anonymity under which he hid—hid, and then complained of unsucccess. Now at last the



name Nathaniel Hawthorne was in the open. Reviews appeared, including a long one, adulatory if empty, by Longfellow in the *North American Review*; and a letter came from John L. O'Sullivan, editor of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, asking for contributions. Hawthorne, if still in but a minor way, had hit upon success. At least he could never refer to himself again as "the obscurest man of letters in America."

*Twice-Told Tales* was to bring him a wife as well, and she was not to be any of the young women with whom during the past few years rumor had connected his name, or any of those—still more numerous—whom he had secretly considered in such a light. In April 1837 Bridge asked Hawthorne in a letter: "Are you seriously thinking of getting married?" And Hawthorne hinted to Longfellow in the following June that he would soon have "one sharp spur to exertion" which he formerly lacked. Who the spur was remains unknown; but the note-book he kept in Maine during his visit to Bridge in July and August, when he also renewed his acquaintance with Jonathan Cilley whom he had not seen since college, contains this entry for August 12th: "At Thomaston . . . a frank, free mirthful daughter of the landlady, about twenty-four years old, between whom and myself there immediately sprang up a flirtation, which made us both feel rather solemn<sup>er</sup> when we parted on Tuesday morning. She is capable, I know, of strong feelings; and her features expressed something of the kind, when we held out our hands for a parting grasp." Then this without break or pause: "Music in the evening, with a song by a rather pretty, fantastic little devil of a brunette, about eighteen years old, who has married within a year." Hawthorne, whose tales had made so much of the

terror lest love fail to "unite us with our kind," was finding it true that women are attractive. But it was a reader of his first book who brought him to his bride, Sophia Peabody of Salem.

Elizabeth Peabody, the eldest of three daughters who lived with Dr. Nathaniel Peabody and his wife on Charter Street, in a house overlooking the old burying-ground which Hawthorne was to celebrate in his last romance, had been astonished to learn that the author of *Twice-Told Tales* was none other than the son of their old neighbor, Madame Hathorne. For the Peabodys once lived on Union Street, and the small children had played together. Elizabeth Peabody was now a blue-stockings who kept up with "things," and this meant that she had noted the tales of Hawthorne as they appeared anonymously or pseudonymously in periodicals. Her aim at once was to meet the mysterious author whom people called handsome. It took her a year, she says, to do so. But she managed it, and on a spring evening in 1838 the house on Charter Street received a call from Hawthorne and his sisters.

"I was alone in the drawing-room," she says; "but Sophia, who was still an invalid, was in her chamber. As soon as I could, I ran upstairs to her and said, 'O Sophia, you must get up and dress and come down! The Hawthornes are here, and you never saw anything so splendid as he is—he is handsomer than Lord Byron!' She laughed, but refused to come, remarking that since he had called once, he would call again. So I went down to them again, and we passed a very pleasant evening. Elizabeth [Hawthorne] with her black hair in beautiful natural curls, her bright, rather shy eyes, and a rather excited, frequent, low laugh, looked full of wit and keenness, as if she were ex-

perienced in the world; there was not the least bit of sentiment about her, but she was strongly intellectual. There was nothing peculiar about Louisa; she seemed like other people."

Sophia had been an invalid since twelve, suffering from incessant headaches and keeping much to her room, where she painted and read and drew, and latterly worshipped Mr. Emerson. "We had an exquisite visit from Waldo," she had recently written. "It was the warbling of the Attic bird. The gleam of his *diffused* smile; the musical thunder of his voice; his repose, so full of the essence of life; his simplicity—just think of all these, and of my privilege in seeing and hearing him." She also wrote: "I think Mr. Emerson is the greatest man that ever lived. *As a whole* he is satisfactory. Everything has its due with him. In all relations he is noble. He is a unit. . . . Mr. Emerson is Pure Tone."

She was now in her twenty-seventh year. She was "high-strung, quick-witted, and quick-tempered," her son Julian says; "high-spirited, generous without limit, and, above all, profound and vital in her affections. . . . In person she was small, graceful, active, and beautifully formed. . . . I incline to think that a mathematical survey would have pronounced her features plain; only, no mathematical survey could have taken cognizance of her smile. . . . Beautiful or not, I have never seen a woman whose countenance better rewarded contemplation."

Hawthorne did call again, says Elizabeth Peabody, and this time Sophia came down, "in her simple white wrapper, and sat on the sofa. As I said 'My sister, Sophia,' he rose and looked at her intently—he did not realize how intently. As we went on talking, she would frequently interpose a

remark, in her low, sweet voice. Every time she did so, he would look at her again, with the same piercing, in-drawing gaze. I was struck with it, and thought, 'What if he should fall in love with her!' and the thought troubled me; for she had often told me that nothing would ever tempt her to marry, and inflict on a husband the care of an invalid."

Hawthorne was not to marry Sophia until 1842, when her headaches were cured, but he fell in love with her from the first, and she with him. He called again, and only to see her. Once when he called, she writes, "I descended, armed with a blue, odorous violet. Mr. Hawthorne would not take off his coat or stay, because he had the headache and an engagement. . . . He looked very brilliant notwithstanding his headache. . . . What a beautiful smile he has! You know, in 'Annie's Ramble,' he says that if there is anything he prides himself upon, it is on having a smile that children love. I should think they would, indeed. . . . He has a celestial expression. It is a manifestation of the divine in human."

Still insisting that she would never marry, Sophia nevertheless called at Herbert Street and met Madame Hawthorne. "We talked about the sea, and the winds, and various things. . . . I think I should love her very much." And Hawthorne came many times again to Charter Street, until one morning when he made "a take-leave call, looking radiant. He said he was not going to tell any one where he should be for the next three months; that he thought he should change his name, so that if he died no one would be able to find his gravestone. He should not even tell his mother where he could be found—that he intended neither

to write to any one nor to be *written to*. He seems determined to be let alone."

He was off, in fact, on the last of his annual summer excursions, this time to the Berkshires and the Green Mountains, where he stayed from July until September and kept a note-book in which he set down every thing or person he saw, but in which no mention of Sophia occurs. A few days before he left, however, he made this entry: "Ladur-lad, in The Curse of Kehama, on visiting a certain celestial region, the fire in his heart and brain died away for a season, but was rekindled again on returning to earth. So may it be with me in my projected three months' seclusion from old associations." He was off, it may be, to forget Sophia if he could; or if not that, to remember her by herself, with no hovering sisters to understand, interpret, and explicate their love. The second sister, Mary, the future wife of Horace Mann, was intellectual too. Even Sophia was intellectual. And Hawthorne thought he detested intellectual women—indeed, he was to insist upon this as long as he lived. Yet he loved Sophia with a simplicity that is rare in the human record. She was rapturous, and he thought he did not like rapture, but this made no difference. She was fond of words and he was afraid of them, but this did not matter either. Perhaps her instantaneous and entire devotion to him was the thing he had been looking for. At any rate, the end of this year or the beginning of the next saw them secretly engaged—secretly, because the doubts of Madame Hawthorne and her daughters, particularly Elizabeth, had to be considered; because the Peabodys would have talked too much; and because secrecy itself was a delicious thing.

The young man who had called with his sisters, says

Elizabeth Peabody, looked "almost fierce with his determination not to betray his sensitive shyness, which he always recognized as a weakness. But as he became interested in conversation, his nervousness passed away." This was normal for the person Sophia refused to see, then saw. Hawthorne was now thirty-four, and his character had been formed. Advancing age was to make him heavier, both in body and in spirit, but the essential Hawthorne was here. He was a man whom no one ever found it easy to describe.

His descriptions of himself, numerous and charming though they are, should never be taken literally. They are tentative; they give the impression that he is trying to make up his own mind concerning the sort of soul he carries. "He was almost as much a puzzle to himself," says an English biographer, "as he was to anyone else. He seemed, in fact, to be two men; and the one was constantly in the attitude of watching and commenting on the other." He walked through the world like one both in it and not in it—very much present, for everybody remarked upon his good hard sense, yet noticeably absent too. Not only were his stories strange—even to him, it would appear; he himself could be both friend and stranger, so that he was set down by one acquaintance as living simultaneously a natural and a supernatural life. Elizabeth Peabody said he thought in both eternity and time; by which she may have meant what others meant when they said he was "simply impenetrable." And he was content on the whole to have this reputation. "God has imparted to the human soul," he wrote, "a marvellous strength in guarding its secrets, and he keeps at least the deepest and most inward record for his own perusal." In New England fashion he denied that it

was anybody's business who he really was; and so, like Miriam in *The Marble Faun*, he "kept people at a distance."

Everybody who saw him, now or later, thought he was fine-looking, especially about the eyes, which Charles Reade said were the most magnificent he had ever seen in a human head. They were sometimes reported as gray-blue, sometimes as dark, but no one missed their depth and luster. His hair was a rich brown, then gray, and finally snow-white. Julian said he was never robust; rather, "he was exquisitely balanced." Neither his body nor his face was reported without reservation as strong. Emerson felt in him, it is said, "a feminine cast of mind." As if to go with this, Ellery Channing, who knew Hawthorne in Concord, detected in his slow, rather bulky movements "a soft rolling gait." Another Concord neighbor, in later days, spoke of "his singular flexibility, or dereliction of the spinal column, which forbade him usually to hold himself erect." He looked, said someone, "like a boned pirate." Nobody failed to notice that he hung his head a little on one side, "in a position," says his daughter Rose, "indicating alert rest." He seemed a little taller than he was, though indeed he was above the medium height. His hands, says Rose, were large, gentle, slow, and efficient. A lady in Italy thought the lower part of his face weak.

He had more than his share, some thought, of indolence. He was not very ambitious, nor was his vitality perfect. "How few people in this world," he once wrote Margaret Fuller, "know how to be idle!" He knew how, very gracefully. Whittier said "he never seemed to be doing anything, and yet he did not like to be disturbed at it." "There was a lovable want of eagerness about him," says Henry James. This sometimes looked like sluggishness, but it could have

been the "suspended animation" of which another spoke. For there was great strength in him somewhere, which now and then in his work he used, but only now and then.

If he was spoiled and selfish, none of those who waited on him—his sisters, his wife, his friends, and later on his publishers—ever said he was, and perhaps none of them even thought so. He complained of all the places he was in with one exception, the Old Manse; he was chronically bored, and he serenely accepted, as he serenely demanded, the innumerable favors done him. The person to whom they were done was humorous and just: a quiet, slow, honest, and fascinating man whom nobody minded helping.

Not the least of his fascinations was a skeptical temper nothing could overturn. It was as necessary for him to doubt as to believe, and he never liked to be caught in the act of feeling to the full. He wanted to be thought practical, and was. Frequently in his stories a man appears whose motto is "No nonsense." Hawthorne disapproves, but part of him is that man. At seventeen, writing to his mother in Raymond about Kean's performance of *King Lear* which he had gone to see in Boston, he said: "It was enough to have drawn tears from millstones. I could have cried myself, if I had been in a convenient place for such an exploit." This boy was father to the man whose maturest tragedies are beyond tears. If in his weakest tales he seems timid, or inhibited, or incompletely engaged, in his strongest ones he has penetrated to regions where nothing will be learned from beating the breast. In his life he was like that too. His friends seldom knew whether his lack of enthusiasm meant that he was without any interest at all or so profoundly interested that demonstration had become impossible.

He knew these things about himself, perhaps too well.



The one man in him who watched the other was without illusion or ardor, a man of the world whose pessimism on any level could be a chilling thing. His instincts to accept and reject were equal and simultaneous. "I am slow to feel," he remarked in his English note-book, "—slow, I suppose, to comprehend, and, like the anaconda, I need to lubricate any object a great deal before I can swallow it and actually make it my own." The "rhinoceros-armor against sentiment and tenderness" which he found in his young daughter Una had been first in him—certainly not in her mother. He knew he was like this and could do nothing about it, nor on the whole did he care to. At its best he recognized his self-command as habitual to the act of hiding feelings that were well worth hiding. There is "a strange tranquillity," runs a passage in *The Marble Faun*, "which is really more passionate and less controllable than emotions far exceeding it in violence." He also knew, as he made clear in "P's Correspondence," that "great poets should have iron sinews." "It is requisite for the ideal artist," he says in "The Artist of the Beautiful," "to possess a force of character that seems hardly compatible with its delicacy." The poet, like the prophet, the reformer, the criminal, must learn to live in a cold world; but the poet's is the coldest of all, at least if he is a great one, for his job will be to see through the distortions of those who do not understand so well what it is that they think and feel. Hawthorne's citizenship in the cold world permitted him in turn to look with pitiless detachment at Puritans, at Transcendentalists, and—a lesser madness—at mesmerists and mediums. He was very proud of his "one little grain of hard New England sense."

But it worried him too. He could never conquer the fear

that he was *too* cold. The result was either "a dull, vague pain about the heart" or else an uncharacteristic haste to be enthusiastic when all the while he knew that the moment would pass, the ardor would cool. In his stories the result might be a sermon on the horrors of not having a heart; indeed it was too often this, rather than a making use, for comedy or tragedy, of his own. He feared that he had none, or that it was like the heart of Gervayse Hastings in "The Christmas Banquet"—something that yielded him neither joys nor griefs, something that let him look like a man yet made him upon close inspection seem "chill and insubstantial—a mere vapor." This was far from true of Hawthorne's heart, but he was not steadily enough an artist to have the courage of the special position which art licenses in those who have the will and skill to hold it. Most of all he feared in himself, and even hated, the very power that made his writings famous: the power "of insight into the gloomy mysteries of the human heart," the power to analyze conditions of the soul which most men, if they admit them at all, are too confused to consider calmly. For him this power went with a habit of wanting to see without being seen. The "Paul Pry" of the early sketches who sat behind a curtain and furtively watched the world, the aging author who occupied a nook in his Boston publisher's office where he could watch in silence the customers who did not dream he was there, the traveler who tried never to be introduced under his own name, the Miles Coverdale of the hotel—each of these was Hawthorne, relishing and yet distrusting the experience.

His humor was incessant, but much of it lacked mirth. The scenes of gaiety in his books seldom seem spontaneous, and often are elephantine. "Laboriously light and lament-

ably mirthful"—his own phrase, from "Old News," fits the case. In conversation, says his publisher Fields, he could be "marvellously moved to fun" and was possessed of "an inexhaustible store of amusing anecdotes to relate of people and things." But Mrs. Fields adds that his wit had more irony in it than joy. "I never saw him smile," said one who knew him in Concord, "except slightly with his eyes." Anthony Trollope, hearing how much Hawthorne had admired his novels, read Hawthorne's; and found no page in them "not tinged by satire." A "weird, mocking spirit" was everywhere. Even in *The Scarlet Letter*, said Trollope, there was "a touch of burlesque—not as to the suffering of the sufferers, but as to the great question whether it signifies much in what way we suffer, whether by crushing sorrows or little stings. . . . In this way Hawthorne seems to ridicule the very woes which he expends himself in depicting." Trollope was speaking of the man who in *The House of the Seven Gables* could observe that weak men weep because they lack the "tragic power of laughter"; who in "An Old Woman's Tale" could report faces so full of joy "that it assumed the shade of melancholy"; and who justified the carnival scenes in *The Marble Faun* by invoking "a deeper wisdom that stoops to be gay as often as occasion serves, and oftenest avails itself of shallow and trifling grounds of mirth; because, if we wait for more substantial ones, we seldom can be gay at all."

Hawthorne, like many silent men, talked more than he thought he did. At fifty-four he said in his note-book: "I doubt whether I have ever really talked with half a dozen persons in my life, men or women." But this may be true for anyone who sets himself the highest standard of communication. Sometimes he seemed barely to communicate

at all. "I delighted in suggesting a train of thought to your father," Oliver Wendell Holmes said once to Rose at dinner. "It was a long while before the answer came, like an echo; but it was sure to come." This same man, however, had often amused this same daughter by humorous rages, by mock diatribes, that went on loosely as if they would never end. Hawthorne was fond of extravagant words, at least to the few he knew he loved. Nothing in his letters to Sophia is more delightful than the fierceness that suddenly breaks out—at "that abominable old pier," for instance, near Liverpool in 1855. "The atmosphere of the river absolutely sawed me asunder."

"Give my regards to everybody," he wrote home from England, "and my love to half a dozen." If he liked crowds, as Elizabeth rightly says he did, it was only for a certain purpose; and only when he was free in their midst. With individuals he was cautious and strict, as he was with himself. Simplicity he at once respected, but fools and bores, particularly pretentious bores, he never spared. He knew his own weaknesses, of will and sentiment, better than anybody; and pointed them out. He anticipated every critic he will ever have. For this person, intricate though he appears, was devoted to nothing so much as to the truth.

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## Tales and Sketches

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BY 1838, the year of his new life, Hawthorne had written more than two-thirds of the tales and sketches he was ever to write, and in *Twice-Told Tales* had offered a selection of them to the public in whose will to be interested he had so little confidence. If neither the volume of 1837 nor the second volume which was added to it in a new edition five years later contained certain of his finest narratives to date—"Roger Malvin's Burial" and "Young Goodman Brown" had to wait until *Mosses from an Old Manse* in 1846, and "The Wives of the Dead" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" until *The Snow-Image* in 1851—*Twice-Told Tales* was and is a sufficient representation of his talent. And if half a dozen of his most famous tales were still to be written during the ten years before 1848 when he finally lost interest in the form, the present moment in his career was one at which he could have paused, as indeed he did, to consider what sort of artist he was and to measure how much he had done.

His development had been slow, and his product was still slight. He was nearing the age at which Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*, and still he had not found the richest, the

deepest relation between his own soul and the world. The problem thus posed was one of which he hitherto had been, and always was to be, perhaps too conscious. His consciousness of it, furthermore, too often took the form of blaming his situation rather than himself. He believed, and wrote to Longfellow in June 1837, that he suffered from a "lack of materials." On this occasion the cause was his own limited life. "I have seen so little of the world," he said, "that I have nothing but thin air to concoct my stories of, and it is not easy to give a life-like semblance to such shadowy stuff." On other and later occasions he blamed America. In the preface to *The Blithedale Romance* he lamented that his country included among its provinces no "Faery Land," no special world "so like the real world that, in a suitable remoteness, one cannot well tell the difference, but with an atmosphere of strange enchantment, beheld through which the inhabitants have a propriety of their own. This atmosphere is what the American romancer needs." And in the preface to *The Marble Faun*, written in England on the eve of the Civil War, he returned to the lament. He had chosen Italy for his scene, he said, "as affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon as they are, and must needs be, in America. No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land."

Hawthorne never liked to admit that when an artist does not find his materials he must make them; or, what is better, find them after all. Homer, Virgil, Dante, Cervantes,

Shakespeare, had done so—who else was finding what they found?—and in the very home country of which Hawthorne complained Cooper and Irving had already made courageous discoveries. But “I do abhor an Indian story,” Hawthorne said; and though he recognized in his *Wonder-Book* that “Rip Van Winkle,” being the perfect thing it was, would last as long as any of the Greek legends he was retelling, he never learned more from Irving than the secret of his thinnest sentiment. There was Poe, too, a strict contemporary and living rival, who had made his own weird world out of nothing at all; who thought Hawthorne maintained in his tales too much of a monotone, so that he was “peculiar” rather than “original.” “The author who . . . is merely at *all* times *quiet*, is, of course,” said Poe in his deadly fashion, “upon *most* occasions merely silly and stupid.” He acknowledged that Hawthorne was not always quiet, but he missed in him an “ever-present force of imagination, giving its own hue, its own character to everything it touches, and, especially, *self-impelled to touch everything*.” Now Hawthorne had made his own discoveries, and they were great. But it was not easy at the time to see what they were, and even his own knowledge of them was not clear enough to make him put them forth as claims. Also, he never fell out of love with the “real world” of “broad and simple daylight” which half the time he treated as the foe of his fancy, the enemy of his art.

For better or worse he accepted his lot as lonely. If this was the most American thing about him he did not know it, nor did he guess how typical he was when he assumed that the “partial light” in which his fancy played shone also—or he hoped against hope that it did—for a few other hidden souls as lonely as his was. He made much of an

"invisible audience" of "cognate minds" for whom, and only for whom, one wrote what was nearest to one's heart. "Somewhere among your fellow creatures," he told Lewis Mansfield in 1850, "there is a heart that will receive yours unto itself." *Twice-Told Tales*, he said in 1851, had been written "to his known or unknown friends." The preface to *The Marble Faun* even goes so far—though with Hawthorne's inevitable humor—as to make this audience a single person: "that friend of friends, that unseen brother of the soul" who is more appreciative, more indulgent, "and in all respects closer and kinder than a brother." There is banter in this, yet Hawthorne means it too. He means it too often. The amateur in him speaks softly, but not too softly to be mistaken for any other man. It was the same man who signed his early tales "Oberon," or "Ashley Allen Royce," or "The Rev. A. A. Royce"; who shyly burned so many of his manuscripts—but he burned letters too, his own and others; and who may not have been too sorry when Charles Fenno Hoffman, reviewing *Twice-Told Tales* in 1838, pictured its author "as a stricken deer in the forests of life." Hawthorne was no bleeding fawn, but he accepted too many excuses, within him and without, for his failure to labor more continuously than he did toward the fulfilment of his own prescription in "Passages from a Relinquished Work": "wide observation, varied knowledge, deep thoughts and sparkling ones . . . ; lofty imagination, veiling itself in the garb of common life; and the practised art which alone could render these gifts, and more than these, available."

The worst that can be said of *Twice-Told Tales* was said by Hawthorne himself in 1851. "They have the pale tint," he wrote then, "of flowers that blossomed in too re-



tired a shade—the coolness of a meditative habit, which diffuses itself through the feeling and observation of every sketch. Instead of passion there is sentiment; and, even in what purport to be pictures of actual life, we have allegory, not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver. Whether from lack of power, or an unconquerable reserve, the author's touches have often an effect of tameness; the merriest man can hardly contrive to laugh at his broadest humor, the tenderest woman, one would suppose, will hardly shed warm tears at his deepest pathos. The book, if you would see anything in it, requires to be read in the clear, brown, twilight atmosphere in which it was written. . . . The sketches are not, it is hardly necessary to say, profound; but it is rather more remarkable that they so seldom, if ever, show any design on the writer's part to make them so."

The last sentence is the most revealing. Hawthorne seems puzzled by his own lack of ambition, then or even now. There is a curious complacency in this confession, as if it were no great sin after all to cultivate one's powers too little, to do at any time less than one can. Hawthorne's hardest critic, W. C. Brownell, put it finally in a sentence concerning Hawthorne's view of his own genius. "His serene satisfaction with what he conceived to be its limitations, as inevitable, as immitigable, led him in fact to exaggerate them." The exaggeration, that is to say, was itself an indulgence, a pleasure taken so slyly that even the man who took it may have been deceived.

"We have allegory." It is Hawthorne's best and worst device. "He is infinitely too fond of allegory," said Poe; and advised him to "get a bottle of visible ink." Poe

could not see, as others have not seen, that without his allegory Hawthorne would be nothing. Which is not to say that it is often at its best. It is most often at its worst. Among the labors Hawthorne could not or would not perform was the labor, which Dante never shirked, of keeping his significations always solid, always clear. Hawthorne knew Dante, but he knew Spenser and Bunyan better, and they are masters of the second class. Chillingworth is less a man than an Archimago, as Donatello is something of a Satyrane, and as Lucifera returns to earth in the Lady Eleanore. Hawthorne's places—his chambers, his villages—are often Caves of Despayre and Sloughs of Despond which occupy no plausible areas on the map of human experience.

But "Young Goodman Brown" and *The Scarlet Letter* are allegories too, and they are great. Faith's pink ribbons in the shorter tale, Hester's whole figure and career in the longer one—there could be no greater critical folly than to deny the power of these things because it is symbolic power. At his highest, as many have seen, Hawthorne stands somehow in company with the Greek tragic poets. It was the serious artist in him who understood Shakespeare well enough to be able to say: "Whatever you seek in him you will surely discover, provided you seek truth." But this artist slipped with too soft an ease into the daintier delights. "A fanciful story, evolving a thoughtful moral"—his words, and they have a weaker ring; they suggest that neither the story nor the moral may be true. "Methought this impression in my fancy might be the shadow of a spiritual fact"—a minor poet, pleased with his own ways, is pleading there. Henry James, who liked Hawthorne as well as anybody has, admitted that much of the time he

exhibited no more than "a kind of small ingenuity, a taste for conceits and analogies," such as "is apt to spoil two good things—a story and a moral, a meaning and a form." On such occasion his imagination, grown miniature, went in search of pebbles to fit sermons of pocket size; it was the sermons of which he was proud; indeed, too proud, so that he forgot how "silently and unobtrusively, like gravity," the pull of truth is in any first-rate fiction.

"Upon my honor," Hawthorne himself wrote to Fields in 1854, "I am not quite sure that I entirely comprehend my own meaning in some of these blasted allegories." This was when he had ceased to write tales and sketches, when he had forsworn "mist and glorified fog." He was abusing himself in characteristic fashion, but he did know the difference, and earlier than this, between the two dimensions of allegory. He knew that allegory is a good thing only when it contains "the history and experience of many souls." He knew how real an idea must be made to seem, and how little reality will appear if the story at hand does not "possess enough physical substance to stand alone." "Human nature," he remembered, "craves a certain materialism, and clings pertinaciously to what is tangible, as if that were of more importance than the spirit accidentally involved in it." Neither of two halves can be greater than the other, but it was clear to Hawthorne which half of a story must seem to be the whole. It is the visible half, the fact that has become an idea, the object that has blazed into an image. Doubtless no poet has been perfect in this art. Those, however, have come nearest to perfection who oftenest have found images in which their entire energy could rest; and this has been the case with those whose theory of existence has been the most consistent, or in the

best sense simple. Hawthorne's weakness, such as it is, shows up not in the fertility of his moral imagination, for there was no failure there, but in the rarity with which he found the hard, incompressible substance—with fast colors, too—that could support the sum of his available feeling. This he did often enough to deserve his reputation, and his reputation rests on no other triumph. His Great Carbuncle, for instance, is as real as its meaning, just as Hester's letter A lives on in the embroidery it adorned. That he missed success so many times, however, indicates how insecure his vision remained. It was not single enough to escape contamination from his fancy, which by and large preferred to wander through regions where there were no fences or connecting paths. Hawthorne trusted too easily to some sixth sense which guided him wherever dusk was, so that feeling became more necessary than seeing. Perhaps he never absolutely stumbled in that place, but neither does it matter that he could always keep going. His fancy was collecting twilight flowers; or, as he liked to put it, was in quest of "hidden," of "inner" things. He was a little too fond of things it is easy to call deep. "Man's finest workmanship," he remarked in his note-book for 1837, "the closer you observe it, the more imperfections it shows; as in a piece of polished steel a microscope will discover a rough surface. Whereas, what may look coarse and rough in Nature's workmanship will show an infinitely minute perfection, the closer you look into it. The reason of the minute superiority of Nature's work over man's is, that the former works from the innermost germ, while the latter works merely superficially." Humble and shrewd though this observation is, it reminds us too forcibly of Hawthorne's inveterate prejudice against that very surface of

life where the artist must work. "What is tangible" can never, save at the workman's peril, be relegated to second place.

Hawthorne was always grouping his tales, and any category he conceived indicated clearly the nature of his current effort. A historical bent revealed in the titles *Seven Tales of My Native Land* and *Provincial Tales* gave way in time to whatever is suggested by *The Story-Teller*, and eventually to implications not to be missed in *Allegories of the Heart* and *Sketches Experimental and Ideal*. The "thousands upon thousands of visions" which he told Sophia had appeared to him in the "haunted chamber" of Herbert Street are typified by paragraphs for which the note-books are justly famous. "A well-concerted train of events to be thrown into confusion by some misplaced circumstance, unsuspected till the catastrophe, yet exerting its influence from beginning to end." "The scene of a story to be laid within the light of a street lantern; the time, when the lamp is near going out; and the catastrophe to be simultaneous with the last flickering gleam." "Two lovers, or other persons, on the most private business, to appoint a meeting in what they supposed to be a place of the utmost solitude, and to find it thronged with people." "A person to consider himself as the prime mover of certain remarkable events, but to discover that his actions have not contributed in the least thereto. Another person to be the cause, without suspecting it." "A recluse, like myself, or a prisoner, to measure time by the progress of sunshine through his chamber." "A rich man left by will his mansion and estate to a poor couple. They remove into it, and find there a darksome servant, whom they are forbidden by will to turn away. He becomes a torment to them; and, in the

finale, he turns out to be the former master of the estate." "Two persons to be expecting some occurrence, and watching for the two principal actors in it, and to find that the occurrence is even then passing, and that they themselves are the two actors." Such ideas for stories, so startling in the silence that surrounds them, so quietly and smoothly powerful, could have come only to genius; for there would be no way to contrive or force their coming. They are perfect Hawthorne, and any reader of him returns to them as somehow to a center. But they were not available to him at the start. His first tales were historical; or, if not that, "gothic."

The America of Hawthorne's youth was much lectured to about the need of its looking into the local past for the materials of its fiction. As Scott had done, so any New World romancer could do; and so, quite in his own fashion, Hawthorne did. His achievement in the historical tale is still unique. This is partly because he had a real sense of the past. America was already an old country to him, with a genuine darkness overhanging its former days, a pure and palpable terror that he could feel. Witchcraft for him was not fiction, it was fact; he still experienced its mystery and its guilt, just as he was peculiarly able to penetrate whatever was most cruel and gloomy in Puritan thought. This is why he remains a kind of authority upon the seventeenth-century Massachusetts which, so far as his reading was concerned, came to him chiefly from the Mathers. But it was already in him when he read the *Magnalia* and *The Wonders of the Invisible World*. So was eighteenth-century New England in him when he read of it in Bancroft, or before Bancroft in fugitive authors whom scholarship has long since traced. "Poetry," he once

said, "is a plant which thrives best in spots where blood has been spilt long ago." It was the moments of violence that interested him, whether or not they issued in blood. He could go on and invent the blood; or he could stop short of it in such a scene as that of "The Gray Champion," where with an eloquence which he had learned from Scott, and with an eye that Scott too had trained in the appreciation of human tableaux, he summoned up the venerable figure—borrowed from regicide legends—of an old Provincial in whom the primitive spirit of New England survived. In "The Gray Champion," in "The Maypole of Merry Mount," in "Endicott and the Red Cross," and in the four *Legends of the Province House* which opened the second volume of *Twice-Told Tales*, Hawthorne confined himself to the painting of august and awful crowds. He was very good at this, and he never surrendered the prerogative, in *The Scarlet Letter* or elsewhere. But his attention in these early tales did not concentrate as it was soon to do upon one or more individuals for whom the crowd was mere setting and background, sympathetic or ironic as the case might be. Hawthorne at first was wholly picturesque. His pictures, however, yield sounds as well as sights. His own style, so slow, so mournful, so mysterious, seems to conspire with the speech of legendary men and women to enrich our sense of certain great if rather vague events in an old time that will never come again. It conspires also with supernatural sounds—"drums, trumpets, and all sorts of martial music, passing athwart the midnight sky, accompanied with the roar of cannon and rattle of musketry." If Hawthorne wrote "The Battle-Omen" (a piece which appeared in the *Salem Gazette* in 1830), he was preparing himself, twenty years in advance of *The*

*Scarlet Letter*, for the sky terrors Arthur Dimmesdale saw.

His first known tale, "Alice Doane's Appeal," is both historical and gothic. It deals with Salem witchcraft, but it mixes this major theme with melodrama about incest, fratricide, double identity, and further fearful matters in which spurious masters had schooled its author. Also, it seems to be a confused rewriting of something done more simply before, perhaps in college. "An Old Woman's Tale," in which an elderly couple, risen from the grave with all of their contemporaries while a living village sleeps, dig a hole in the ground where something lies buried which they both hope and fear to find, breaks off so abruptly that it is impossible to say what Hawthorne meant by it. But nearly at the same time with pieces of such uncertain merit he was doing some of the best work he ever did. "The Gentle Boy," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," "Roger Malvin's Burial," "Young Goodman Brown," and "The Wives of the Dead" are early too. They too are historical in some fashion. They even keep the gothic touch. But they are moralized as only Hawthorne knew how to moralize whatever, until he considered it, remained merely neutral or merely shocking stuff.

"The Gentle Boy" was one of Hawthorne's earliest successes, in the days of his anonymity when readers of the *Token* could only guess who had written this tale of the Quaker persecutions. It is a long tale for Hawthorne, and suffers a little from the multiplicity of its ingredients; for in addition to being a mature study of bigotry and martyrdom—a study so mature indeed that the impartiality with which it is conducted passes almost without notice in the midst of so much that moves us because it is true—"The Gentle Boy" aims at some of the shivers which came all



too easily in those days with violent storms, night meetings, portentous voices, and women with wild, raven hair. The hero is Ilbrahim, a little boy whose father has been hanged for his faith but whose mother, Catharine, still roams New England as "the apostle of her own unquiet heart." The mother is treated with a detachment that permits Hawthorne to deplore her fanaticism even while he pities her suffering. The same detachment rules in the account of Tobias Pearson and his wife Dorothy, who take in the homeless Ilbrahim and thus experience every form of prejudice that is possible in a populace whose convictions have been flouted. Tobias, converted by reaction to the faith that is so despised, is weaker than Dorothy in the way most of Hawthorne's men are weaker than his women: it is he who has the ideas, but it is she who knows how to face the crowd. Her wisdom is a part of her courage; whereas the wisdom of Catharine is no wisdom at all but a heartless obsession which lets her abandon her son so that she may rage through the world, appalling and paralyzing those whom she lashes with eloquence. Hawthorne has no more sympathy with her than with the people who persecute her. She returns to sanity only when Ilbrahim is dead, just as they develop charity only after the need of it has ceased. "Every one spoke of her with that degree of pity," the closing sentence runs, "which it is pleasant to experience; every one was ready to do her the little kindnesses which are not costly, yet manifest good will; and when at last she died, a long train of her once bitter persecutors followed her, with decent sadness and tears that were not painful, to her place by Ilbrahim's green and sunken grave." Cool words, suitable to the dissection that has preceded them.

The sympathies of Hawthorne are all with Ilbrahim, as

Sophia showed that hers had been when, shortly after their first meeting on Charter Street, she let him see a drawing she had made of the Gentle Boy at the moment of his discovery by Tobias under the tree of his father's martyrdom. Hawthorne, who instantly assented to the likeness, published it the next year, in 1839, as the frontispiece to a special edition of the tale. It is more like Flaxman, with whose drawings Elizabeth Peabody had entertained him and his sisters the first evening they called, than it is like Hawthorne. Its thin lines have nothing of the power he had put into his sentence about the wind on that autumn evening of the discovery—"whirling away the leaves from all except the pine-trees, and moaning as it lamented the desolation of which it was the instrument." Desolation is the name of Ibrahim's country. If he is happy for a while with Tobias and Dorothy, the "residue of unappropriated love" which tempts him to seek the friendship of the neighboring children, and to believe that in one case, the case of a deformed boy whom he has helped his foster-parents restore to health after an injury, he possesses such friendship—this residue is cruelly recompensed. One day the "brood of baby fiends," with the lame boy as their leader, "lifted sticks against him, pelted him with stones, and displayed an instinct of destruction far more loathesome than the bloodthirstiness of manhood." This is something like Pearl and her infant persecutors in *The Scarlet Letter*. It is Hawthorne remembering that children have in them too "the devil of their fathers." It is Hawthorne's answer to the question of Tobias: "Do we not all spring from an evil root?" The answer for Hawthorne was always Yes. "There is evil in every human heart," he wrote in his

note-book in 1836; and it is his distinction, as man, as artist, that he never forgot it.

"My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (which Goodrich had called by the title "My Uncle Molineaux") is another tale of one more sinned against than sinning; or, to speak in language appropriate to the piece, more jolted by the facts of life than his youthful years have prepared him to be. Young Robin, coming from the country to Boston where he hopes that his uncle, Major Molineux, an influential person in the court party, will start him on a career, does not know that this is the evening the provincial citizens have chosen to tar and feather Major Molineux. His ignorance is the entire matter of the tale, whose atmosphere grows steadily more strange and sinister as Robin goes from barber-shop to tavern, then from tavern to street after street, inquiring where his kinsman lives. Hawthorne has managed a high-spirited suspense, a carnival mood of mockery, consistent at once with the young lady in a scarlet petticoat who tries to entice Robin inside her door and with the "bulky stranger, muffled in a cloak," whom he encounters a second time in the street, just before the tell-tale procession arrives. This hideous stranger is either Hawthorne's Satan or merely the master of ceremonies for tonight. "The forehead with its double prominence, the broad hooked nose, the shaggy eyebrows, and fiery eyes were those which he had noticed at the inn, but the man's complexion had undergone a singular, or, more properly, a twofold change. One side of the face blazed an intense red, while the other was black as midnight, the division line being in the broad bridge of the nose; and a mouth which seemed to extend from ear to ear was black or red, in contrast to the color of the cheek. The effect was as if

two individual devils, a fiend of fire and a fiend of darkness, had united themselves to form this infernal visage." Hawthorne does not call him Satan, but a certain bright and civil savagery that rules everywhere in the tale supports our shudder of suspicion. It passes over Robin too, only to be followed by his loud, involuntary laughter—an infection from the crowd—when Major Molineux's humiliation is manifest at last. In the end he is much as he had been, except that he knows he has no prospects. Asking his way to the ferry that will take him home, he is merely a young man over whose handsome head a storm has passed.

Young Goodman Brown is not so lucky. The storm of his tale passes through and through him, leaving no portion of his soul unblasted. Nothing that Hawthorne wrote came from a deeper source—not even *The Scarlet Letter*, in whose pages it lives again. It is one of the world's great tales, and for a more serious reason than Henry James supposed. James, who thought it a "magnificent little romance," hastened to deny its depth; for he was committed to the theory that Hawthorne had only an aesthetic interest in evil, so that "Young Goodman Brown," for instance, must be "not a parable but a picture." It is a perfect picture, and hence needs to have no more meaning than one wishes to think it has. If it is a parable it is perfect too, for no statement of its meaning could be as short as it is, or as interesting. It "evidently means nothing," James insists, "as regards Hawthorne's own state of mind, his conviction of human depravity and his consequent melancholy; for the simple reason that, if it meant anything, it would mean too much." Too much, that is, for Henry James.

"Young Goodman Brown" means exactly what it says, namely that its hero left his pretty young wife one evening—left her with the wind playing among the pink ribbons at her head—to walk by himself in the primitive New England woods, the Devil's territory where black anthems made nightly music, and either to dream or actually to experience (Hawthorne will not say) the discovery that evil exists in every human heart. The older man whom he soon meets, and who looks something like his father, has "an indescribable air of one who knew the world." He is the Devil, walking there with Goodman Brown—or is it but a dream?—to waken in his soul the consciousness of sin, his own and every other person's. The shadow of sin falls upon his ancestors who persecuted Quakers and murdered Indians in mass; upon saintly elders who still live; and finally upon Faith. For as night ages in the forest an ominous cloud sweeps across the sky, hiding the stars, and "aloft from the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices." This might have been the wind, but it was more like a chorus of all the voices he knew, and it included the voice "of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain."

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, 'Faith! Faith!' as if bewildered wretches were seeking her through all the wilderness." Brown held his breath, and then "there was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent cloud above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly

down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon."

Few things in fiction are more startling, or more important, than this pink ribbon. Is it there, or is it only dreamed? If it is there, what explanation can there be save the one young Brown accepts? The Devil exists, and Faith has become one of his converts. All three answers come at once, in a texture of fact and implication which Hawthorne has woven as closely as life is woven. The ribbon may not be there, but in that case this is no ordinary dream, no nightmare like Robin's which will be gone tomorrow. For Brown is changed. He thinks there is no good on earth, "and sin is but a name." He hastens to the wild place where even now a great rock shaped like an altar is surrounded by four blazing pines. "Still rushing forward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil, . . . he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors." Its other horrors include the sight of Faith among the unholy congregation, waiting with them to be initiated into the art of penetrating, "in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin." For all these people—and Brown is one of them at last—will henceforth be "more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own." Brown, waking from his dream, if it was a dream, goes home to Salem in the morning and finds Faith, her head still gay with ribbons, so overjoyed at his return that she skips down the street and almost kisses him before the whole village. But he looks "sternly and sadly" into her face, passes on without a word, and is never the same again. He has become "a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man" who sees evil even where it is not and suspects it when he is not sure.

His very "dying hour was gloom," says Hawthorne. He had stumbled upon that "mystery of sin" which, rightly understood, provides the only sane and cheerful view of life there is. Understood in Brown's fashion, it darkens and sours the world, withering hope and charity, and perverting whatever is truly good until it looks like evil at its worst: like blasphemy and hypocrisy.

To say, in disagreement with James, that "Young Goodman Brown" meant much to its author is not to say that it derived from his experience—at twenty-five he had had very little of that—but to suppose that it came out of his most personal, most peculiar thought; that it did come, in other words, out of the experience which for him mattered most. Whenever he wrote supremely well, this was his theme. Of course it is necessary not to overlook, what James hoped would never be overlooked in Hawthorne, the artistry with which the poet perfected his moral. To be an artist at all is to remain at some remove from truths which those not artists merely state. "Young Goodman Brown" is not a statement, it is a story. It is so good a story that readers of it must rarely be tempted to decide what it means. But it means so much because it is so good a story; because the pink ribbon, mentioned several times near the beginning, is not mentioned again until it falls out of the sky; because the sounds of this special world are so brilliantly, so heartbreakingly orchestrated; because the hum of a supernatural energy is authentic from beginning to end; because, in short, Hawthorne neglected no triumph of his art in the service of whatever idea it was that possessed him.

"Roger Malvin's Burial" is a soberer tale, but with that difference is perhaps as good. Hawthorne made it up out

of a ballad, as he says, and a prose account, as he does not say, of Lovewell's Fight. Its hero, again unlike Robin, is marked forever by the thing that happens to him; or rather, does not happen. Reuben Bourne, on his way home from the Fight in company with Roger Malvin, an older man to whose daughter Dorcas he is betrothed, passes the crisis of his life in the deep forest where Roger, so weak from his wounds that he cannot go on, lies down to die at the foot of a great rock and beseeches his companion to continue without him. With relentless subtlety Hawthorne at this point probes every recess of Reuben's conscience. He should not leave the old man to die and be eaten by beasts; on the other hand he is wounded himself, and doubtful whether he has the strength to get home even alone. With luck he may find help that can be sent back; though with or without such luck he is sinning if he goes, for he is deserting a comrade who will surely die. He goes at last, suffering in his mind only a little less than he will suffer henceforth. For his second crisis is soon upon him. Brought home unconscious from exhaustion, he is at first unable to tell Dorcas anything at all; then, when he finds that she believes he had remained at least to bury her dead father, he cannot disabuse her of the happiness and pride she feels. His is a twofold secret: he has committed a sin and he has failed to confess it when he could. From this point on he cannot confess it. He marries Dorcas and they have a son; but nothing goes well with them because the father has been transformed into an irritable and gloomy man with whom the world will not live in peace. Years later, a ruined family, they strike off into the wilderness in the hope of building a new home. Fate brings them to the rock where Roger had lain down. Nothing remains there for



Reuben to recognize except an oak to whose topmost bough he had bound his blood-stained handkerchief, vowing "by the blood that stained it that he would return, either to save his companion's life or to lay his body in the grave." The oak had then been but a sapling; now it is a vigorous tree, except that its topmost branch is "withered, sapless, and utterly dead." The catastrophe comes on apace. Hunting food in the nearby forest, Reuben mistakes Cyrus his son for a deer and shoots him through the heart. Dorcas, discovering the dead boy, falls insensible at his side.

"At that moment the withered topmost bough of the oak loosened itself in the still air and fell in soft, light fragments upon the rock, upon the leaves, upon Reuben, upon his wife and child, and upon Roger Malvin's bones. Then Reuben's heart was stricken, and the tears gushed out like water from a rock. The vow that the wounded youth had made the blighted man had come to redeem. His sin was expiated—the curse was gone from him; and in the hour when he had shed blood dearer to him than his own, a prayer, the first for years, went up to Heaven from the lips of Reuben Bourne."

The soft, light fragments of the withered bough—it is they, and not the fact of the withering, by which the great Hawthorne may be known. They are moving as Faith's ribbon is moving, and they are as little to be doubted. To reject them, as some do who distrust Hawthorne's symbols, is never to have felt the force of Reuben's terrible secret, his "incommunicable thought," his "one secret thought" that became "like a chain binding down his spirit and like a serpent gnawing into his heart," his "insulated emotions," his "cold, cold sorrow." Hawthorne was to make much of these things in all of his major narratives. Here he creates

them with an unexampled economy, and himself feels them so powerfully that he can be content at the end with this absolutely weightless, this almost immaterial token of atonement.

Not the least interesting thing about "Roger Malvin's Burial" is the way in which its author speaks for its hero without seeming to identify himself with him. Reuben is represented as an inarticulate man, "unable to penetrate to the secret place of his soul where his motives lay hidden." So Hawthorne must tell us everything. But it is not as if he had taken it out of his own heart, as in some sense must have been the case. His tone never loses its coolness. He is again the dissector, feeling with trained fingers among tissues tragedy has torn. He seems not even to be inventing such details as that of Reuben's stealthy return, a short while after he left Roger, to look at him through the leaves without himself being heard or seen. It was "a wild and painful curiosity," says Hawthorne, that impelled Reuben thus to spy upon the victim of his cowardice. It was something like the "haunting and torturing fancy" he had in later years, namely that "his father-in-law was yet sitting at the foot of the rock, on the withered forest leaves, alive, and awaiting his pledged assistance." Hawthorne appears to know as a fact that Reuben has this fancy; a curious, cold fact that he must therefore list with the others that he knows. Such is the way of artists who can manage what they feel. That Hawthorne felt this story is no more to be doubted than that he kept each part of it under control.

"The Wives of the Dead" is perhaps the slightest of these five early successes, as it certainly is the briefest; yet no reader of it will forget the speed with which its interior lights up and stays lit with a significance almost too deli-

cate to name. It concerns Mary and Margaret, "brides of two brothers," who live in the same house and as the tale commences are mourning their husbands' deaths, news of which has come on two recent, successive days. While Mary sleeps, Margaret lies and listens to a knocking downstairs at the street door. Getting up to look out, she sees of course with Hawthorne's eyes. "A lantern was reddening the front of the house, and melting its light in the neighboring puddles, while a deluge of darkness overwhelmed every other object." The lantern belongs to an innkeeper who has come to tell her that her husband is safe in battle after all. "So saying, the honest man departed; and his lantern gleamed along the street, bringing to view indistinct shapes of things, and the fragments of a world, like order glimmering through chaos, or memory roaming over the past." Hawthorne's eyes again at their beautiful work, though we do not pause to say so.

But their best vision is soon to come. For Margaret, hurrying to wake Mary and tell her the good news, stops short when she sees her face. "A look of motionless contentment was now visible upon it, as if her heart, like a deep lake, had grown calm because its dead had sunk down so far within."

It is not Mary's good news, says Margaret to herself, so she will spare her. While she in turn sleeps happily, Mary is awakened by another knocking downstairs. "A young man in a sailor's dress, wet as if he had come out of the depths of the sea, stood alone at the window." He has come to say that her husband was not drowned as had been reported. Her first thought is as Margaret's had been; but she too refrains, and only a tear of joy and sorrow,

falling suddenly, awakens her sister-in-law; when the tale as suddenly ends.

An opening paragraph rather stiffly and clumsily places these events in the eighteenth century. But they are timeless events, and once Hawthorne is truly among them he is master of the simple matter they contain. He is free to perform such miracles of lighting as he had already performed in "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." He is moved to create, and then to contemplate with characteristic tenderness—a tenderness unique in story—the love of two girls not only for each other but for their husbands whom we never see. And he is ready to write that sentence about the deep lake whose dead have sunk down so far within.

The five tales are all in a sense historical, but only in a sense. The *Legends of the Province House*, written in 1838, are more simply so, although they too develop with a dusky grandeur themes which Hawthorne had been otherwise occupied with during his thirteen years on Herbert Street. "Edward Randolph's Portrait" touches upon the mystery which it was a gothic convention to find in works of art. "Lady Eleanore's Mantle" is a study of pride. And the heroine of "Old Esther Dudley," who lives on in the Province House after kings and governors are no more, mumbling at a mirror in which she is believed by some to see them still in their garments of state, is one of several such old crones in Hawthorne.

The bulk of Hawthorne's output in this period had consisted either of mystical and moral tales or else of sketches written in the broad daylight where Hawthorne liked to think he was more at home. The romantic moralist, however, was no less at home. The two Hawthornes of this

time lived on in all the later work, and never were made thoroughly acquainted with each other.

One of them was visited, or formed the habit of believing himself visited, by what in "The Haunted Mind" he called "this nightmare of the soul; this heavy, heavy sinking of the spirits; this wintry gloom about the heart; this indistinct horror of the mind, blending itself with the darkness of the chamber." Sorrow was the food of his spirit, as the human heart was for him a universe to be explored.

"The human heart to be allegorized as a cavern," runs a later passage in the note-books; "at the entrance there is sunshine, and flowers growing about it. You step within, but a short distance, and begin to find yourself surrounded with a terrible gloom, and monsters of divers kinds; it seems like Hell itself. You are bewildered, and wander long without hope. At last a light strikes upon you. You peep towards it, and find yourself in a region that seems, in some sort, to reproduce the flowers and sunny beauty of the entrance, but all perfect. These are the depths of the heart, or of human nature, bright and peaceful; the gloom and terror may lie deep; but deeper still is the eternal beauty."

For better or worse this region became, at least on alternate days, Hawthorne's geography. It is of course a great place; but in the tales before 1838 he is not always its master. He says he is, but his tone of familiarity can be unconvincing. It is the tone at times of one for whom the mysterious has become commonplace; has become, almost if not quite, a commodity. Such was surely not the case with any of the five great tales he wrote during his first years out of college. But their freshness disappeared. He worked for it again without ever exactly finding it; so that his depression of 1836, and his willingness to try the

miserable expedient of a tenth-rate editorship in Boston, not to speak of his joy two years later when he found that the world contained Sophia, may be explained on the simple ground that his dismal chamber had so far not yielded what it was meant to yield. It had yielded a monotone, a repetition of little romances about the cavern of the heart; a series, too, of sermons about the necessity of sympathy and love, and about the sin of separation from one's kind.

Joy and sorrow are recommended in this series as experience to be had, but they are not had. Hawthorne lavishes all the art he commands upon embellishing the sermon. His device of mentioning marvels without authenticating them is here as always. The marvels come, but then as if by clockwork comes the disclaimer: only the old wives of the town, or credulous children, believe what Hawthorne himself seems above believing. The slow, musical style is here also, and the sudden power with phrases. "One night, when the stars threw down the light that shadows love"—there it is, in the piece called "Graves and Goblins." And Hawthorne's two favorite epithets—"tremulous," "airy"—flit over nearly every page. The result of so much labor, nevertheless, is seldom the one thing he wants. It is not power. The people of these tales are scarcely people at all. They are too often the "lukewarm and abortive characters, composed of heterogeneous materials, used for the thousandth time, and never worth using, with which romance writers (and myself, no doubt, among the rest) have so overpeopled the world of fiction."

When Hawthorne wrote that, in "Feathertop," the year was 1848. It was the year of his decision to be done with tales forever. He was reviewing his own past; and as usual,

he was being a little hard on it. For it is not true that "The Wives of the Dead" was the last piece of fine work done in Hawthorne's chamber. "The Ambitious Guest" and "The Great Carbuncle," fruits of his journey through the White Mountains in 1832, are rich and dark with memories of that place, memories which only a few months had converted into visions. The fabulous red stone that travelers seek above the timber line, where Hawthorne says Nature herself no longer keeps them company, is among the most potent objects he ever contemplated—the shadows of trees fall backward from it. If the travelers he sends to see the Carbuncle are less convincing than it is, and as symbols less imposing, this is only to say that the tale is not quite one of his masterpieces. Perhaps "The Minister's Black Veil" is one, though a certain irresolution in the moral suggests that it is not. The Reverend Mr. Hooper's "type and symbol" of the truth that each man lives alone and shrinks from looking straight into the "sunshine of eternity," his veil that stirs with every sigh of his faint breath, is one of the most famous things in Hawthorne, and it deserves its fame. But it is something we see better than we understand, so that we fear it—we do fear it—without enlightenment. "Its gloom, indeed, enabled him to sympathize with all dark affections." And as he dies he says: "I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!" This means the reader too, but the reader has the same escape that Hawthorne has when he resorts to two words prominent at the close. The veil "obscurely typifies" some mystery, he lets Mr. Hooper say. Obscurely, yes. But even the mystery is obscure. The bell that tolls throughout "The Wedding Knell" is gifted with true plangent power. And "Peter Goldthwaite's Treasure" deals merrily

with a subject Hawthorne will return to in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Peter himself, the hermit in a house whose interior he wrecks and burns for the sake of a fortune he believes is hidden there, is equal in charm to the little old woman, Tabitha, who watches him and grumbles at his madness. The moment when Peter forces open one of the front windows and blinks down at the snow-covered town he has not seen for weeks is one of those surprising moments in Hawthorne when a vigor so far only latent in his matter comes suddenly into full life. If John Brown, the sensible citizen who stands in the street and scolds his old friend, is less interesting than the friend, the same thing will be true of Judge Pyncheon, as in "The Artist of the Beautiful" it will be true of Peter Hovenden. Hawthorne never quite persuades us to despise sensible men, for the very practical reason that he is one himself.

"The White Old Maid" is narrative of a lesser order, and this is true of nine other period pieces whose melodrama has now a dainty sound. It was not dainty then, for melodrama was unsuspected. Hawthorne and his readers did not know how soon funerals would lose the grisly charm they had for a generation brought up on tolling bells and generalized gloom such as "The White Old Maid" counts on for its effect, not to speak of a misdeed at the start which nothing in the tale elucidates. "The Prophetic Pictures" likewise assumes a perpetuity of willingness in readers to shudder at the power of art—in this case paintings—to meddle in the destinies of men. "Fancy's Show Box," a moral parable, suggests that guilty thoughts are no less material in eternity than guilty actions are in time. It follows from this that "man must not disclaim his brotherhood, even with the guiltiest, since, though his



hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting phantoms of iniquity." This is true; it certainly was true for Hawthorne; but his contrivance in the present case leaves it a cold truth, killed of its relevance and therefore silly. "The Man of Adamant" begins better than it ends. Richard Digby carries the sin of spiritual pride so far as to confine himself in a sunless cave where nothing can pollute the perfection of his worship. But something—is it the error of his isolation or the chemistry of the cave?—petrifies first his heart and then his entire body, so that children at play, finding him still in place a century later, are horrified by the image. This might well be one of the allegories which Hawthorne, rereading, called "blasted." From similitudes so coarse no wisdom can be gained. Hawthorne in the tale thinks to meet the charge of moral exaggeration by throwing out as a possible explanation of Digby's fate "the moisture of the cave"; but in so doing he weakens the one point he has. He knew as well as anybody, and said so once, that the worst weakness in art is exaggeration. He did not escape it here.

In "Monsieur du Miroir" he achieves the opposite weakness. The mirror, the reflected figure, is one of his most frequent themes, and at moments one of his most powerful. Now that he is alone with it, however, and has nothing to give us but a man's grimaces at himself in glass, he cannot find the secret of this power. He tries over and over to surprise it and pin it down, but he never does. Perhaps it is a power to be hinted, not developed. In any case it does not visit Monsieur's monologue, except perhaps in his plaintive observation that "there is something fearful in bearing such a relation to a creature so imperfectly known" as one's own self at last made visible. "Dr. Heideg-

ger's Experiment" again has the interest that attaches to an author's first contact with an idea that will rule him. The elixir of life was to haunt Hawthorne through all his days; he was in fact to die midway of an attempt to make out of it one more romance which might even be his best. Nor is "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," which shows how four venerable fools are not improved by the youth they momentarily regain, altogether without vigor and charm. But the idea is still not sunk into the depths of Hawthorne's mind. He can dismiss it too gaily. "Sylph Etherege" and "The Lily's Quest" have faded into the likeness of certain old prints at whose seriousness we smile when we see them on walls. The faint maidens of complacent allegory are no longer even pretty. The moral of "The Lily's Quest," in the words of Hawthorne's note-book for 1836, is that "there is no place on earth fit for the site of a pleasure-house, because there is no spot that may not have been saddened by human grief, stained by crime, or hallowed by death." Very well. But Adam Forrester and Lilius Fay find this out in the waxy way of an outlived lithography. The conclusion says they have read "the darkest riddle of humanity," but readers of the tale will not have done so. They will merely have been told, in the accents of a modish melancholy, what Hawthorne has already told them in "Chippings with a Chisel": there is perhaps as much comfort, "leaving religious influences out of the question," in "the dark shadowings of this life, the sorrows and regrets," as there can ever be in "what we term life's joys." Something of the same sort must be said of "The Threefold Destiny," whose homespun moral is that dreams of human service can be satisfied as well in one's own village as elsewhere in the world; and of "Edward Fane's Rosebud," in

which Hawthorne fails to make as much as he evidently desired to make out of a figure he conceived in his notebook: the rather awful figure of an old woman who does nothing but haunt sickbeds and funerals.

The sketches of Hawthorne, as distinguished from the tales, had a vogue at the time which it is still possible to understand, for many of them have kept their freshness. A sketch was expected to be topical and discursive; far from being moral or grave, it might even be saucy, or at any rate wholly secular, with the lightest touch everywhere, befitting its light material. Henry James, indeed, was content to have those of Hawthorne about "nothing at all." "Simply to mention them," he said, "is to put them in a false position. The author's claim for them is barely audible, even to the acute listener. They are things to take or leave—to enjoy, but not to talk about." They were what Longfellow, nevertheless, seems to have liked most in *Twice-Told Tales*, and contemporary critics saw no radical difference, say, between "Young Goodman Brown" and "Little Annie's Ramble." Poe even preferred that sketch to that tale, as of course others did. Hawthorne himself might well have believed that the sketches as a whole represented his more normal and therefore his more important self. Certainly he published a great many of them, and lavished upon them some of his purest effort as a writer. "Not to read them," says Henry James, "would be to do them an injustice." It would also be to miss a very special pleasure. They must be read with the leisure, and in the silence, of one who demands nothing save "soft miracles" such as Hawthorne found in Leigh Hunt's prose. Hawthorne's harder miracles had "the devil" in them, as he put it more than once; and he stood in such awe of the

devil that he avoided him when he could. So far as satisfaction went, there was more of it for him in the sketches than in the tales, as there was more in *The House of the Seven Gables* than in *The Scarlet Letter*. He preferred to seem a citizen, not a soul; he thought it was more like being his natural self.

His remarks in *The Marble Faun* about Hilda's sketches—done, of course, in another medium—apply perfectly to his own. They had been “scized upon by men of taste,” he said, because of their “scenes delicately imagined, lacking, perhaps, the reality which comes only from a close acquaintance with life, but so softly touched with feeling and fancy that you seemed to be looking at humanity with angels’ eyes.” In his own sketches what passes for angelic vision is the detachment of Paul Pry, a fellow who is both there and not there, because while seeing he remains unseen. The quiet spectator of the sketches trades in the illusion that he knows the world better than it knows itself; sometimes sadly, sometimes impudently, he smiles at its folly and monotony, but in his charity he permits it to go on being what it is, a thing to watch and be wise about rather than to mingle with. This fellow is particularly attractive in “Sunday at Home,” where he sits behind his window curtain and studies the people pouring in and out of church. For example: “Those pretty girls! Why will they disturb my pious meditations! . . . Were I the minister myself, I must needs look. One girl is white muslin from the waist upwards, and black silk downwards to her slippers; a second blushes from topknot to shoe-tie, one universal scarlet; another shines of a pervading yellow, as if she had made a garment of the sunshine.” Hawthorne had a sharp eye for every feminine charm; and this perhaps

makes "Sunday at Home" better than "Sights from a Steeple," though that earlier sketch was more famous in its time.

His travel pieces about Niagara, the Canal, Ticonderoga, the White Mountains, and other places he visited in summer have something of the same omniscient air. At Lake Champlain, for instance, he delighted in the "continual succession of travellers who spent an idle quarter of an hour in waiting for the ferry boat; affording me just time to make their acquaintance, penetrate their mysteries, and be rid of them, without the risk of tediousness on either side." This is omniscience on the adolescent scale, and happily it is not repeated. Hawthorne made richer use of his Connecticut journeys. "Rambling on foot in the spring of my life and the summer of the year, I came one afternoon to a point which gave me the choice of three directions." That is how "The Seven Vagabonds" begins, and it is much better; indeed, it is exciting. Hawthorne is always fresh when he takes to the road, as Dominicus Pike is on the morning when we meet him in "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe." From the New Hampshire journeys Hawthorne derived not only the august materials of "The Ambitious Guest" and "The Great Carbuncle" but those more sad and simple ones that distinguish his two Shaker tales, "The Canterbury Pilgrims" and "The Shaker Bridal." Probably he was teasing Louisa when he told her he might join the Shakers, and later in Lenox, when he visited with Melville the community at Hancock, he had little to say of the "plain people" that was even respectful. But the literature of this celibate sect contains nothing to compare with the two pieces in which Hawthorne penetrated its pathos. The "calm despair" and "desolate agony" of Martha

in "The Shaker Bridal," doomed to the loss of Adam's love by his decision that they shall both take the vow, are rendered with more than respect; they are the stuff of tragedy.

From other experiences Hawthorne took little and gave little—which is not to say, as James so properly suggests, that it was nothing. "Wakefield" was the result of his reading that a man in London, "under pretence of going a journey, took lodgings in the next street to his own house, and there, unheard of by his wife or friends, and without the shadow of a reason for such self-banishment, dwelt upwards of twenty years." This was bound to interest Hawthorne, who early and late reflected upon "the fearful risk" involved in "stepping aside" from life even for a moment; but the minor triumph of "Wakefield" consists in the way it keeps its subject tenuous. The mild, obscure, secretive, rather absurd person of the sketch remains precisely all of those things at the end. Hawthorne has speculated about him but learned nothing; which is what he intended, for the very blankness of Wakefield's act, the almost anonymous imbecility of it, was what interested him in the first place, and his design had been never to rise from there. The tenuity of "A Rill from the Town Pump" is of another order. The tone is exclamatory because there is so little to say, Hawthorne evidently thinks, about this spout from which Salem drinks; but there must seem to be a good deal. The piece became a temperance tract, somewhat to Hawthorne's amusement, and was reprinted around the world; he heard of it years later in Italy. It is less interesting now than certain less forced exertions like "Night Sketches," in which Hawthorne simply walks through Salem rain and says what the puddles show him; or "The Toll-Gatherer's Day," in which he

watches people crossing a bridge; or "Footprints on the Sea-shore," which is the best of them all, being a composite account of Hawthorne's many walks along the Massachusetts beaches. Any of these wears better than those semi-narratives, "The Vision of the Fountain" and "David Swan," that are so near the average performance of their age; or than "Mrs. Bullfrog," a narrative indeed but the only vulgar one its author wrote.

New England's ghost walks in all of these sketches. Neither the ancient land is here—the land of *The Scarlet Letter* and a dozen powerful tales—nor the land which in Hawthorne's youth was becoming new country. Industry is as absent as the other side of the moon, and the Irish, for all his many references to their having come, do not materialize for him into more than a dim shanty race of whose reality he is unsure. The sketches come from the top of Hawthorne's mind, the part he liked best because it was the gentlest part, the easiest part to live with. It is our luck that he did so with such grace. It is our greater luck that he was forced now and then to go down and live with the devil.





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## The Deep, Warm Secret

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HAWTHORNE'S thirty years in Herbert Street came to an end not only with his discovery of Sophia and his desire to marry her but with his decision to seek political employment. The two of course were connected; he had somehow to make enough money to support a wife, and he had no reason to suppose he could do this by writing stories. So far he had barely supported himself. And indeed his literary income was never to be adequate, even for a man so thoroughly schooled as he was in the mild expectation, the modest demand. The rest of his life, therefore, was spent in politics or the shadow of politics.

If this seems strange, several simple explanations are at hand. Hawthorne was a competent person who could do whatever he needed to do; there were friends who in this case could help him do it; and he was not without interest in politics as such.

The record shows that his competence as a seeker and holder of office was notable even in that time of Spoils. He was skilful in negotiation, on his own behalf and that of others; he understood the principles of harmony and

compromise; he knew how to take shrewd measure of the men he dealt with; he did his work reasonably well; the humor with which he viewed the entire enterprise was often the humor of contempt and cynicism, but he could conceal this when necessary; and he was unimpeachably loyal to his friends.

His friends in college had been Democrats. Partly for that reason, he too was a Democrat; yet there were other reasons. The Whigs of Salem were too respectable and pompous for his taste—"blockheads," he once called them. At all times in his life he preferred plain company; to him no individual was unimportant, and he could even lean over backward to defend nonentities. His instinct as a storyteller was to assume the dignity of persons as against the claims of class or the authority of generalization. Also, his own taste was plain—stubbornly plain, sometimes perversely so. It was a taste that went with his skepticism and his conservatism. For if he had thought of himself in college as "progressive," there was always to be a conservative coloring in his thought. "The great conservative is the heart." Democracy, he felt, was what let people be. It was the quieter and honester faith. And it was the faith of Andrew Jackson, whom Hawthorne never ceased to consider the one great figure of his time. In Jackson's name he chose his political friends: not only Pierce and Bridge, but such men in Salem as Roberts, Burchmore, and Pike. The fact that a section of Salem dismissed Democrats as "rowdies" recommended them to Hawthorne.

Bridge and Pierce, it will be remembered, had tried without success to get Hawthorne the job of historian on an expedition to the South Seas. Now there came a happier turn. In January 1839 Hawthorne was appointed measurer

of coal and salt, at a salary of \$1,500, in the Boston Custom House. Elizabeth Peabody had appealed to George Bancroft, who was then collector of customs at Boston; and it was to Hawthorne's advantage that in September he had published an obituary of his friend Cilley, whose promising political career had been so suddenly ended by a duel.

Hawthorne left his chamber, then, to spend laborious days on wharves or in the grimy holds of cargo ships. He did so with a certain high relish in the complete change this would involve. He wrote Longfellow that he was entering upon his new occupation with all the confidence of Sancho Panza when Sancho became governor. But the main thing was that he had opened "an intercourse with the world." He might now be about to discover what "reality" was like. "The deep, warm secret, the life within the life"—he was still to write these words, in his tale "The Christmas Banquet," but the sense of them was in his head as he embarked upon the course he was to follow for at least a dozen years after the cold day in January 1839 when he descended into the bowels of his first ship. These dozen years were to end with another period of customs service, in Salem, and with the writing of *The Scarlet Letter*; they were to include his marriage, his first unqualified happiness, and his days in the Old Manse; and incidentally they were to teach him the limited value, for himself at any rate, of any other kind of work than the kind he was chosen to do. Money was necessary, and what he called the world's work was something he could manage. It even had its rewards. But the one place he truly lived and labored in was his imagination. All in all these dozen years were to be the richest of his life.

They begin for us with his letters to Sophia. These are

his masterpiece of the next three years, and they will always stand, if read together, as one of his great works. They are the letters of a man so deeply and happily in love that every quality he possesses glows for the first time in its fullest strength. They are passionate, they are delicate, and they are humorous. Beginning in the spring of 1839, when Hawthorne is living with George Hillard in Boston, they run on to his marriage in 1842; and run on after that with no diminution of their beauty and force, although the occasions for them, his absences from Sophia, are naturally fewer then. Her letters must have been remarkable too; few survive, because when he went to England he burned them. But in one that survives she says: "Thou art a necessity of my nature as well as its crown of perfection and voluntary grace. It is astonishing how much more I love thee every day." This was the tone both took. It was a seraphic tone, which he oftener than she could modify, or perhaps validate, with a wit that expressed his sense of the new strength suddenly given them by love. He playfully insists that she, the invalid, is stronger than he is; and he knows in what sense this is true. "I have been to walk, this afternoon, to Bunker's Hill and the Navy Yard, and am tired, because I had not your arm to support me." "How I wish I could give you a portion of my insensibility! and yet I should be almost afraid of some radical transformation, were I to produce a change in that respect. If you cannot grow plump and rosy and tough and vigorous without being changed into another nature, then I do think, for this short life, you had better remain just what you are." "I never, till now, had a friend who could give me repose; all have disturbed me, and, whether for pleasure or pain, it was still disturbance. But peace overflows from your heart into

mine." "It is very singular (but I do not suppose I can express it) that, while I love you so dearly, and while I am so conscious of the deep union of our spirits, still I have an awe of you that I never felt for anybody else. Awe is not the word, either, because it might imply something stern in you; whereas—but you must make it out for yourself. I do wish I could put this into words—not so much for your satisfaction (because I believe you will understand) as for my own. . . . And then it is singular, too, that this awe (or whatever it be) does not prevent me from feeling that it is I who have charge of you. And will not you rebel? Oh, no; because I possess the power to guide only so far as I love you. My love gives me the right, and your love consents to it." "Oh, my dearest, do let our love be powerful enough to make you well. I will have faith in its efficacy. . . . Partake of my health and strength, my beloved. Are they not your own, as well as mine? Yes,—and your illness is mine as well as yours; and, with all the pain it gives me, the whole world shall not buy my right to share in it. . . . Let me be your Peace, as you are mine." "What an ugly day is this! My heart is heavy; or, no, it is not heaviness—not the heaviness, like a great lump of ice, which I used to feel when I was alone in the world, but—but—in short, dearest, where you are not, there it is a sort of death." "You only have revealed me to myself; for without your aid my best knowledge of myself would have been merely to know my own shadow—to watch it flickering on the wall, and mistake its fantasies for my own real actions. Do you comprehend what you have done for me?" "Oh, beloved, what a weary week is this! Never did I experience the like. Will you know my face when we meet again? Are you much changed by the flight of years, my poor little

Sophie? Is your hair turned gray? Do you wear a day-cap as well as a night-cap? How long since did you begin to wear spectacles? Perhaps you will not like to have me see you, now that time has done his worst to mar your beauty; but fear not, for what I have loved and admired in you is eternal. . . . As for me, I am grown quite bald and gray, and have very deep wrinkles across my brow, and crows-feet and furrows all over my face. My eyesight fails me, so that I can only read the largest print in the broadest daylight; but it is a singular circumstance that I make out to decipher the pygmy characters of your epistles, even by the faintest twilight. The secret is, that they are characters of light to me, so that I could undoubtedly read them in midnight darkness."

Thus runs, or races, this unique correspondence, now in, now out of earnestness, yet never out of ecstasy. Their names for each other are legion; there is a gay competition to see which can be the more extravagant. "Dove," "Dearest Love," "Dearissima," "Thou sinless Eve," "Belovedest," he calls her. "My soul's star," "Thine ownest truest Love and Dove," "Oh King by divine right" she calls him. But his most eloquent term for her is "Wife." "Are we not married? God knows we are," he writes in July 1839; and he never deserts the fiction, just as he never ceases to assume that she will recover her strength—the cure of his adoration will work in time.

"Nothing like our story was ever written—or ever will be—for we shall not feel inclined to make the public our confidant," he wrote in January 1840. The secrecy of their engagement was one of its greatest charms, at least for him who was so naturally secretive. His family knew nothing of it yet, and were to know nothing for two more years.

Sophia's family soon knew everything, or almost everything, for she kept little from them. Doubtless they did not know how often he wrote as if indeed he were her husband. His bed was cold without her; "a husband cannot be comfortably warm without his wife."

Nor could they have known the peculiar pleasure it gave him to reveal to her, as the days of the Custom House wore on, exactly what he saw or did there, and how he felt about it. He had never had an ear like hers, into which he could pour every thought he had. "I have been measuring coal all day, on board of a black little British schooner, in a dismal dock at the north end of the city. Most of the time I paced the deck to keep myself warm; for the wind (north-east, I believe) blew up through the dock as if it had been the pipe of a pair of bellows." "All day long again have I been engaged in a very black business." "It appears to me to have been the most uncomfortable day that ever was inflicted on poor mortals. . . . Besides the bleak, unkindly air, I have been plagued by *two* sets of coal-shovellers at the same time, and have been obliged to keep two separate tallies simultaneously." Yet there were fine days to vary this monotony, and there were the men and boys on deck whom he found it so interesting to watch. "On board my salt-vessels and colliers there are many things happening, many pictures which, in future years, when I am again busy at the loom of fiction, I could weave in; but my fancy is rendered so torpid by my ungenial way of life that I cannot sketch off the scenes and portraits that interest me, and I am forced to trust them to my memory, with the hope of recalling them at some more favorable period." He has moments, too, when he despises the political character of his job. Not only is his imagination torpid—the world's

work was always to render it so, here and later on at Salem, and at Liverpool. His spirit is resentful. "I pray that in one year more I may find some way of escaping from this unblest Custom House; for it is a very grievous thralldom. I do detest all offices—all, at least, that are held on a political tenure. And I want nothing to do with politicians. . . . One thing, if no more, I have gained by my custom-house experience—to know a politician. It is a knowledge which no previous thought or power of sympathy could have taught me, because the animal, or the machine rather, is not in nature." Yet he was to have a great deal more to do with politicians, and he was not always to detest them so much.

In 1840, the second year of his employment, the Peabody family moved into Boston from Salem. This altered the circumstances of the correspondence, without breaking it off. In October he was back in Salem to visit his own family, and writing from his room: "Here sits thy husband in his old accustomed chamber where he used to sit in years gone by, before his soul became acquainted with thine. . . . If ever I should have a biographer, he ought to make great mention of this chamber in my memoirs, because so much of my lonely youth was wasted here, and here my mind and character were formed, and here I have been glad and hopeful, and here I have been despondent, and here I sat a long, long time waiting patiently for the world to know me, and sometimes wondering whether it would ever know me at all—at least, till I were in my grave. And sometimes (for I had no wife then to keep my heart warm) it seemed as if I were already in the grave, with only life enough to be chilled and benumbed. . . . By and by, the world found me out in my lonely chamber, and called me



forth . . . and forth I went, but found nothing in the world that I thought preferable to my old solitude, till at length a certain Dove was revealed to me, in the shadow of a seclusion as deep as my own had been. . . . So now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber, and why I could never break the viewless bolts and bars; for if I had sooner made my escape into the world, I should have grown hard and rough, and been covered with earthly dust, and my heart would have become callous by rude encounters with the multitude. . . . But living in solitude till the fullness of time was come, I still kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart, and had these to offer to my Dove."

If this is sentimental, as it certainly is, and if its writer is already in love with his own legend, only half of the man is writing. The other half of him, if we may anticipate by thirty months, wrote from the same place to the same person, after he was married to her, in April 1843: "Here I am, in my old chamber, where I produced those stupendous works of fiction which have since impressed the universe with wonderment and awe! To this chamber, doubtless, in all succeeding ages, pilgrims will come to pay their tribute of reverence: they will put off their shoes at the threshold for fear of desecrating the tattered old carpets! 'There,' they will exclaim, 'is the very bed in which he slumbered, and where he was visited by those ethereal visions, which he afterwards fixed forever in glowing words. There is the washstand at which this exalted personage cleansed himself from the stains of earth and rendered his outward man a fitting exponent of the pure soul within. There, in its mahogany frame, is the dressing-glass which often reflected that noble brow. . . . There is the pine table—there the

old flag-bottomed chair on which he sat, at which he scribbled, during his agonies of inspiration! . . . There is the worn-out shoe brush with which this polished author polished his boots.' " As soon as Hawthorne needs correcting, he himself supplies the correction, more precisely and more maliciously than the most astringent critic would.

The coming of the Peabodys to 13 West Street, Boston, made a good deal of difference in Hawthorne's life. The house there was both fascinating to him and forbidding: fascinating because of Sophia, forbidding because of Elizabeth and the intellectual buzz that was always about her. Dr. Peabody's homeopathic drug shop and Mrs. Peabody's bookstore and circulating library might be of curious interest to him, but he was not so sure that he liked the Transcendentalist activity kept going by Elizabeth on these same premises. Here Margaret Fuller came to hold her famous "Conversations"; here the *Dial* was edited; and here all sorts of important persons came, including Emerson and Thoreau from Concord. Hawthorne was depressed by important people as he was skeptical of high talk, particularly if it came from the lips of women. He listened to the talk, and nobody knew whether or not he resented the power Miss Fuller possessed over Sophia as well as Elizabeth. He would have cared less in the case of Elizabeth, whom he never liked. Ten years later he was admitting in a letter to Bridge—"but this is between ourselves"—that his feelings toward his wife's family were less "admirable" than Bridge's were toward his. And in 1855, writing to Elizabeth from Liverpool in response to some advice Sophia had received from her, he said: "I sometimes feel as if I ought . . . to endeavor to enlighten you as to the relation between husband and wife. . . . But the conjugal relation

is one which God never meant you to share, and which therefore He apparently did not give you the instinct to understand; so there my labor would be lost."

He was not unhappy, however, to have Elizabeth become his publisher, as she did for the children's books he composed in 1840 and 1841. In 1838 he had written Longfellow about a volume of fairy tales they apparently considered doing together, and had pressed Longfellow to proceed with his part of it; but nothing having come of that, he now went on with *Grandfather's Chair*, a child's history of New England, and *Biographical Stories for Children*, a collection of simple, bright tales about Benjamin West, Sir Isaac Newton, Samuel Johnson, Oliver Cromwell, Benjamin Franklin, and Queen Christina of Sweden. In both works he adopted the device he was later to use in *A Wonder-Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*: the stories were told as if to several eager boys and girls, with names, who were nothing at all like the "baby fiends" that tortured the Gentle Boy. They were more inclined toward the nineteenth-century image: little men and women, prettily exclaiming and pouting. The device is deplorable in all of Hawthorne's writing for children, though less so in the *Biographical Stories* than elsewhere, since there must have been for him here a special interest attaching to the resemblance between Edward Temple, to whom the stories are told, and himself in boyhood. "When Edward Temple was about eight or nine years old," the series begins, "he was afflicted with a disorder of his eyes." With Hawthorne it had been lameness. For a transferred reason Edward must be told stories of famous persons to keep him occupied. Each story that he hears deserved its popularity at the time, and still is readable. In the tale of Dr. Johnson at Uttoxeter

Hawthorne almost forgets the youth of his audience; his mature imagination is engaged. "It was the busiest hour of the day. What with the hum of human voices, the lowing of cattle, the squeaking of pigs, and the laughter caused by the merry-andrew, the market-place was in very great confusion. But the stranger seemed not to notice it any more than if the silence of a desert were around him. He was rapt in his own thoughts. Sometimes he raised his furrowed brow to heaven, as if in prayer; sometimes he bent his head, as if an insupportable weight of sorrow were upon him. It increased the awfulness of his aspect that there was a motion of his head and an almost continual tremor throughout his frame, with singular twitchings and contortions of his features." This figure will become Arthur Dimmesdale, tremulous, holding his hand over his heart, as he kills himself with the intolerable effort to confess.

In the same period with these books Hawthorne wrote only two tales for adults, "John Inglefield's Thanksgiving" and "A Virtuoso's Collection." Neither is of much interest now, though the first begins well with the return of an erring daughter to her father's Thanksgiving board, and the hesitation of her twin sister to show the joy she feels lest "her own purity be felt as a reproach by the lost one." Such delicacy in the index is not balanced by the sudden and unaccountable transformation in Prudence Inglefield as she goes forth again. "Her face was so changed that they hardly recognized it. Sin and evil passions glowed through its comeliness, and wrought a horrible deformity; a smile gleamed in her eyes, as of triumphant mockery, at their surprise and grief." This is moral melodrama without moral meaning; it is Hawthorne toying with his one great theme of evil. "A Virtuoso's Collection" merely scrapes together

from the note-books a number of curious items whose importance to Hawthorne, if it was ever importance, can no longer be comprehended.

On January 1st, 1841, Hawthorne resigned his position at the Custom House, and on April 12th he arrived at Brook Farm, the new center to which he had shifted his attention. It was a strange move for one so cool to Transcendentalism and so skeptical of schemes for the regeneration of society. For Brook Farm—though its founder, George Ripley, had failed to convert many of his fellow Transcendentalists to its cause—was such a scheme. Hawthorne had met Ripley during the spring, and somehow had been convinced that he should try out the enterprise. He bought two shares in it, at \$500 a share, and made the try. A year of it was enough for him; the Farm lasted five years.

The move will seem less strange if we consider that skeptics, when they really doubt, are by that very token committed to see more; that this Institute of Agriculture and Education, whatever its high doctrine may have been, was planned as a place where men could work and think, which for Hawthorne meant work and write; that it offered a possible solution for him and Sophia, since they might marry and live there; and that if they could do this, they would both be out of Boston—West Roxbury was nine miles away—and consequently out of Elizabeth Peabody's depressing "sphere." The Farm failed Hawthorne on every count: his doubts were resolved on the dark side, not the light; he was never able to write there, nor did he like the work; and if it was no place for him, it was certainly no place for Sophia. He filled his note-book with observations that bore fruit a decade later in *The Blithedale*

*Romance*. He has even been accused of having gone for copy; his colleagues, uncomfortable under his cool eye, never felt that he was wholly one of them. But it is not necessary to suppose that his original aim was as narrow as this, nor would it matter now if it had been; *The Blithedale Romance* is the poorest of his books.

His first letters to Sophia from Brook Farm, "our future home," were written in high and hopeful spirit, yet laughter sprouted between the lines. The snowstorm in which he had arrived was perhaps as good an omen as the bad weather that greeted the Plymouth pilgrims. "They prospered and became a great people—and doubtless it will be the same with us." "Belovedest, I have not yet taken my first lesson in agriculture, as thou mayest well suppose—except that I went to see our cows foddered yesterday afternoon. We have eight of our own, and the number is now increased by a transcendental heifer belonging to Miss Margaret Fuller. She is very fractious, I believe, and apt to kick over the pail. Thou knowest best whether in these traits of character she resembles her mistress." Hawthorne chopped hay and wood, planted vegetables, did chores of all sorts, and labored in the "gold mine," his name for the manure pile. He rose at half-past four and went to bed tired at half-past nine. "I shall make an excellent husbandman," he assured Sophia; "I feel the original Adam reviving within me." "It is an endless surprise to me how much work there is to be done in the world, but, thank God, I am able to do my share of it, and my ability increases daily." He wrote Louisa, who had made a blue smock for him, that he would certainly make a "complete farmer."

Louisa clearly doubted this, as did the other two on Herbert Street. Whatever hopes Sophia may have enter-

tained, Hawthorne's own family knew better. "You do give a wonderful account of your works," Louisa wrote. "Elizabeth does not seem to have entire faith in it—it passes her comprehension, she says she knows you will spoil the cows if you attempt to milk them. . . . What an event it will be when the potatoes you have planted come up! I should like to see you at work. . . . Your carpet will suffer this summer if you tread upon it with your cowhide boots. Do not work too hard; I have more faith in your working than Elizabeth has, and I am afraid you will take it too hard. Mother groans over it, and wishes you would come home. The portrait came home a fortnight ago, and gives great delight. Mother says it is perfect; and if she is satisfied with the likeness, it must be good. . . . Elizabeth says it is excellent. It has one advantage over the original—I can make it go with me where I choose! But good as it is, it does not by any means supply the place of the original, and you are not to think that you can stay away any longer than before we had it. If you only knew how we anticipated your coming home, and how impatient we are when you do not come at the usual time, you would not think you could be spared. It is a comfort to look at the picture, to be sure; but I am tempted to speak to it sometimes, and it answers never a word; and when mother looks at it, she takes up a lamentation because you stay away so long and work so hard. I wonder if they would not take me into the Community for a week this summer. I should like to get into the country and ramble in the woods. I won't work much, though; neither, I hope, will you when the hot weather comes. . . . I am glad your frock gives satisfaction; I suppose that is your Sunday dress. You can wear that when you are at home; but Beelze-

bub begs that you will leave your thick boots behind you, as her nerves are somewhat delicate and she could not bear them. She came into the room the other night, and looked all round for you, and uplifted her voice. She will not take the least notice of the picture; she wants the real, not the imitation."

Beelzebub was the cat—the same one, presumably, that Hawthorne had invoked in 1836 when, writing home from the office of his miserable magazine in Boston, he had announced: "This world is as full of rogues as Beelzebub is of fleas." Hawthorne did make visits home, and in the fall he was away from Brook Farm for a month. But not then or at any time until his marriage could his sisters and his mother see enough of him. He was their sole existence, as he was soon to become Sophia's. Louisa's letters went on all summer in the same vein. "I do not see how you manage to work this hot weather without your thin clothes; and I do not like your working so hard at all. I am sure it cannot be good for your health to work from half-past four till seven; and I cannot bear to think that this hot sun is beating upon your head. You could but work hard if you could do nothing else, as it is, you can do a great deal better. What is the use of burning your brains out in the sun, when you can do anything better with them? Ebe says she thought you were only to work three hours a day for your board, and she cannot understand your keeping at it all day. . . . I hope you were dressed in your best frock at the *fête* in Brook Farm. I should think your clothes were in a very dilapidated condition by this time, and I am glad of it; for then you will have to come home. . . . I am writing in your chamber. Do come very soon. . . . I have waited for a letter from you till I am tired and cannot wait



any longer. And I have been to the post-office and received the same answer so often, that I am ashamed to go any more. . . . We do not like it at all. . . . Mother is very vehement about it. I take for granted you would like to hear from us; we are all pretty well. Susan Giddings says they frequently heard from you by way of Mr. Farley, whose sister-in-law lives in the house with them, and to whom he writes frequently. She was very much amazed at the idea of your working so hard. . . . I hope you will come home *very* soon; we do want to see you. . . . But if you are not coming home *immediately*, you must write and let us hear from you at least. Mother takes up such a lamentation for you, and then she scolds about you; and Beelzebub comes into the room and hops round it, looking for you; and Ebe is troubled about your working; so you must pacify us all. If you write, say if you want any clothes got ready."

Louisa had known at once, as Hawthorne was quickly to discover, how little reality such work could have for him; it meant no more than measuring coal and salt. She did not know about Sophia's stake in the experiment, nor could she have any more than suspected the spiritual anomaly involved in Hawthorne's being where he was. He was among intellectuals and reformers—much less his kind than the dock-hands he had deserted. Minot Pratt, William Allen, Frank Farley, George Bradford, Charles Newcomb, John Dwight, Warren Burton, Burrill Curtis, George William Curtis, and Charles A. Dana—by no means all of these were eccentric, yet none of them was like Bridge or Pike. They were taking more or less seriously what he could not take seriously at all. They consented, as he could not, to the very names of the houses where work and thought

went on: The Hive, The Pilgrim House, The Nest, The Eyrie. The notables like Theodore Parker who came to visit the Community did not impress him. Margaret Fuller, an occasional guest, held Conversations on Perfection and other topics, but Hawthorne was more interested in "a little seamstress from Boston, about seventeen years old," who came in October and delighted him with her vivacious ways. "Her intellect is very ordinary," he decided, but "it would be difficult to conceive beforehand how much can be added to the enjoyment of a household by mere sunniness of temper and liveliness of disposition." He was to remember her in *The Blithedale Romance*, as he was also to remember Miss Fuller.

When he returned from his vacation in the fall he was made a trustee of the Brook Farm estate and chairman of the committee of finance, but he accepted these offices with the warning that his stay might not be permanent. By the spring of 1842 he knew he must leave, and did. The place had grown "queer" to him. "The real Me" was not there at all, he told Sophia, to whom he also wrote: "We must form other plans for ourselves; for I see few or no signs that Providence proposes to give us a home here. I am weary, weary, thrice weary, of waiting so many ages. Yet what can be done? Whatever may be thy husband's gifts, he has not hitherto shown a single one that may avail to gather gold. . . . We must not lean upon this community. Whatever is to be done must be done by thy husband's own individual strength." As for writing at Brook Farm, there had been little leisure or seclusion for it. He had finished his *Biographical Stories* there and had got together the second volume of *Twice-Told Tales*; perhaps it was there too that he wrote "A Virtuoso's Collection."

But for other than such things he found no freedom. "It is true, nobody intrudes into my room; but still I cannot be quiet." So he departed. He formally resigned from the Institute in October, and three years later, with the assistance of George Hillard, who was a lawyer, sued for the recovery of a loan he had made Ripley ten days before his resignation. Hawthorne's first experience with reform was over.

"This matter of trying to do good," as he put it once to Elizabeth Peabody, was something he never quite settled in his mind. It was not for Hawthorne the simple matter it would have been had he himself been either cynical or doctrinaire. He was too serious, too humorous, to commit either error. He has been called insensitive to the great fact of society, but neither his narratives nor his note-books support the charge. Not only are the individuals of his creation singularly and delicately responsive to one another; the whole human scene of which they are a part is present too. And the actual scene, at any rate as Hawthorne saw it, is alive in his letters and journals. It was his imagination, which sometimes he condemned as slow and literal, that made it so hard for him to understand what was meant by "going ahead." Where was ahead? And was going there more important than "standing still or going to sleep"? He asked this question in the last book he published, but it was always with him. Its earlier form had been something like the following: How do those who chafe and fret to change the world know that the particular change they desire is the one most needed next; and can they be sure that if brought about it will not upset some balance, some providential equilibrium, of which no person can possibly be aware? Surrounded in his day by conservatives and reformers, he could stomach neither. He was not certain what things

were worth defending, what things were due to be done anew. If the picture of Hawthorne in his times is the picture of a bewildered man, hesitating and guessing, and sometimes blundering, the reason is an imagination that never abdicated in favor of phrases or causes. The last thing that should be said of him is that he was indifferent. "In this world," says a passage in "Old News," "we are the things of a moment, and are made to pursue momentary things, with here and there a thought that stretches mistily towards eternity, and perhaps may endure as long. All philosophy that would abstract mankind from the present is no more than words."

Hawthorne knew how monstrous men could be made by faith in words alone. Words at the least were an impertinence; at the most they could be an outrage and abomination. He hated reformers who loved their own sentences more than the silent truth. His name for the silent truth was Providence, which he often invoked. He let Hepzibah Pyncheon be smitten with "the wretched conviction that Providence intermeddled not in these petty wrongs of one individual to his fellow, nor had any balm for these little agonies of a solitary soul; but shed its justice, and its mercy, in a broad, sunlike sweep, over half the universe at once. Its vastness made it nothing." That is both bleak and great—a rare combination, and perhaps Hawthorne never achieved it again. He scarcely did in the smuggler observation, slipped into his *Life of Franklin Pierce*, that slavery might be "one of those evils which divine Providence does not leave to be remedied by human contrivances, but which, in its own good time, by some means impossible to be anticipated, but of the simplest and easiest operation, when all its uses shall have been ful-

filled, it causes to vanish like a dream. There is no instance, in all history, of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods which it adapted to that end." "No human effort on a grand scale," he said ten years later, "has ever resulted according to the purpose of its projectors. The advantages are always incidental. Man's accidents are God's purposes. We miss the good we sought, and do the good we little cared for." Hawthorne was thoroughly convinced of this, but the force of his irony as he states it is weakened by our suspicion that it is not irony at all; that he thinks he knows what really moves events. He is better when he remembers himself and speaks of "the intricate and unintelligible machinery of Providence"; or when he puts the matter in an epigram. "It is only one-eyed people who love to advise." Cato the Censor was such a man to him. Seeing Cato's bust in Italy, he decided that there must have been no more "disagreeable, stubborn, ugly-tempered, pig-headed, narrow-minded, strong-willed old Roman."

Hawthorne at Brook Farm had lived among reformers, and in Concord where he was to live next there would be many more—to be sure, along with Emerson and Thoreau who disliked them. Their reasons would be different from his.

First, however, was the marriage in Boston that took him and Sophia to Concord and their three-year paradise, the Old Manse. He had finally consulted his mother and his sisters about the separation soon to take place. His delay in doing so, he said, was the result of his fear that Madame Hathorne's health would not withstand the shock. A deeper reason perhaps was his knowledge of how hard it would be for the three of them to live without him. In

May he could assure Sophia as to Elizabeth and Louisa, though he had to put it mildly. "They will love you, all in good time, dearest; and we will all be happy." In June he reported that his mother "had seen how things were, a long time ago," and now sent her kindest love. The three of them never did solve the problem of how to live without him. Yet they lived; and Sophia, whose health meanwhile had become perfect, became Hawthorne's wife on July 9th, 1842.

They went at once from her father's house on West Street to the parsonage in Concord where the late Ezra Ripley had lived. The next day Hawthorne wrote Louisa: "We intend that you shall be our first guest. . . . I intend to improve vastly by marriage—that is, if I can find any room for improvement. But all this remains to be seen. Meantime, I promise myself few greater pleasures than that of receiving you here; for in taking to myself a wife, I have neither given up my own relatives nor adopted others. Give my love to mother and Ebe." It is not known whether Louisa was in fact their first guest; visits between the families were always to be rare. But it is known that within a month after coming to the Old Manse Hawthorne had to write Margaret Fuller a letter saying that the poet Ellery Channing, who had recently married Margaret's sister, would not be welcome with his bride "as inmates of our house." "Had it been proposed to Adam and Eve," he said, "to receive two angels into their Paradise, as *boarders*, I doubt whether they would have been pleased to consent." This Adam and this Eve—he and Sophia frequently called themselves that—wanted to have their happiness alone.

It was as near perfect happiness as anything we know.

Hawthorne has left a public record of it in his introductory chapter to *Mosses from an Old Manse*, than which nothing he wrote is more charming. The private record is in the note-book which he and Sophia kept together and in her letters home—an unbroken history, beginning now and going on to the very end, of her life with “my dear Lord.” “Nobody but we ever knew what it is to be married,” he wrote her the next spring from Salem, where he had gone to see his family—and found Elizabeth, incidentally, still “not quite thawed.” “I thank God above all things that thou art my wife.”

Doctor Ripley had composed nearly three thousand sermons in the Old Manse, and there Emerson had written his first book, *Nature*. Hawthorne was to write some of his best stories in the same study—decorated freshly for him by Sophia—but his first instinct was to do nothing save enjoy the almost supernatural quiet of Concord. It was his way, “escaping from the dark region,” of feeling himself at last alive. “Everybody that comes here,” he wrote in 1843, “falls asleep; but for my own part, I feel as if, for the first time in my life, I was awake. I have found a reality, though it looks very much like some of my old dreams.” The Concord River flowed sluggishly beside the house; the rude bridge where farmers had fought in 1775 was at the end of a short path, but it seemed far away too, in the haze of a history which revealed no subsequent events; the seasons followed one another listlessly, delightfully; and few people came in from the road. “I never had a home before,” confided Hawthorne to his note-book. It was wonderful to have one, and to be at leisure there; to learn from Sophia how to value flowers; to work in the vegetable garden among the gigantic squashes; to walk along the river and

through the woods; to sleep; to do nothing at all. Hawthorne's account of his own happiness is unique for its serenity, its sobriety, and on occasion too for the very intelligent and touching humor with which he enlivens it. Louisa does not write him often enough; he begs her to do so at least once in seven centuries; but he hopes she and Elizabeth will be satisfied meanwhile with Sophia's assurance that "he has lost none of his affection for his mother and sisters because of his marriage." An enigmatic sentence in his note-book for 1842 poses the sort of problem he is now free to consider and may be wise enough to solve. "Tender Love, Tough Love, which is better." If Sophia was in his mind at the moment, so was the tenderness of her love, a tenderness that expressed itself as adoration, in an incessant, high, thin, mystical note which he might have liked in no one else but certainly adored in her. "A child, or a young girl, so sweet and beautiful that God made new flowers on purpose for her"—he set this down in his note-book for 1845. Perdita was one of the names he called his wife.

The two of them were not left, of course, entirely to themselves. In addition to the sober citizens of Concord who came to call, there were the "hobgoblins of flesh and blood" who haunted the village because Emerson was there. Emerson's light, said Hawthorne, attracted not only "uncertain, troubled, earnest wanderers through the midnight of the moral world" but—and these were the majority—"bats and owls." "Never was a poor little country village infested with such a variety of queer, strangely dressed, oddly behaved mortals, most of whom took upon themselves to be important agents of the world's destiny, yet were simply bores of the first water." The triteness of



their novel thoughts was "enough to make any man of common sense blaspheme at all ideas of less than a century's standing, and pray that the world may be petrified and rendered immovable in precisely the worst moral and physical state that it ever yet arrived at, rather than be benefited by such schemes of such philosophers."

Even those lieutenants of the faith whom Hawthorne respected and willingly spent time with could grow tiresome. On the whole he found Thoreau "a healthy and wholesome man to know." "As ugly as sin, long-nosed, queer-mouthed," he yet was honest and profound, and in Hawthorne's opinion wrote well—he had so far written neither the *Week* nor *Walden*. They walked and paddled together, and then Thoreau turned out to talk well too—amusingly, without compromise. On other occasions he was "an intolerable bore"; and by 1845 Hawthorne had decided that he was "the most unmalleable fellow alive—the most tedious, tiresome, and intolerable—the narrowest and most notional." "And yet, true as this is, he has great qualities of intellect and character." Hawthorne could scarcely make such claims for the "gnome, yclept Ellery Channing," who soon was at Concord in a house of his own, and who proved at the best to be a sprightly companion with whom Hawthorne found it profitable to waste his time. At the worst he was "but little better than an idiot." Sophia, to whom Hawthorne wrote this once when she was away, thought better of the gnome. "Ellery shines," she said in her journal, "and he seems perfectly to idolize my darling husband." But the husband's journal said more. "He is one of those queer and clever young men," Hawthorne noted during his first September in the Manse, "whom Mr. Emerson (that everlasting rejecter of all that

is, and seeker for he knows not what) is continually picking up by way of a genius. There is nothing very peculiar about him. . . . Nevertheless, the lad himself seems to feel as if he were a genius. . . . I like him well enough, however, but after all, these originals in a small way, after one has seen a few of them, become more dull and commonplace than even those who keep the ordinary pathway of life. They have a rule and a routine, which they follow with as little variety as other people do *their* rule and routine; and when once we have fathomed their mystery, nothing can be more wearisome." Margaret Fuller was frequently in Concord too, and not infrequently she visited the Old Manse. She thought Hawthorne was more like a brother than any man she had known. What he thought of her, if it was less kind than that, he never disclosed. She was of course interesting; and one afternoon when he found her lying with a book in Sleepy Hollow he sat down beside her and they discussed "matters of high and low philosophy"—crows, children, mountains, and the woods. "In the midst of our talk, we heard footsteps above us, on the high bank; and while the intruder was still hidden among the trees, he called to Margaret, of whom he had gotten a glimpse. Then he emerged from the green shade; and behold, it was Mr. Emerson."

Mr. Emerson was for Hawthorne the town's one "great original thinker," and in some younger year, he says, he might have "asked of this prophet the master word that should solve me the riddle of the universe; but now, being happy, I felt as if there were no question to be put, and therefore admired Emerson as a poet of deep beauty and austere tenderness, but sought nothing from him as a philosopher. It was good, nevertheless, to meet him in the

wood-paths, or sometimes in our avenue, with that pure intellectual gleam diffused about his presence like the garment of a shining one; and he so quiet, so simple, so without pretension, encountering each man alive as if expecting to receive more than he could impart." This is generous, and it is misleading. Hawthorne was too accurate a judge of persons to miss in Emerson the quality of his charm. Nobody with imagination ever missed that. But for Hawthorne it could be no more than personal. The intellect of Emerson had less than nothing to give him, just as nothing that came out of his own imagination—out of its depths, at least—could be of meaning to Emerson. They never really talked. Two months after Hawthorne's arrival in Concord Emerson records in his journal a walk with him in which there was "much conversation, for we were both old collectors who had never had opportunity before to show each other our cabinets." Hawthorne may have revealed some curios that day, but nothing more came to light. Emerson's final report confesses his own defeat. "It was easy to talk with him—there were no barriers,—only, he said so little, that I talked too much, and stopped only because, as he gave no indications, I feared to exceed." Sophia observed the failure, and was too faithful to her husband to be sorry. "Mr. Emerson delights in him," she wrote her mother; "he talks to him all the time, and Mr. Hawthorne looks answers. He seems to fascinate Mr. Emerson. Whenever he comes to see him, he takes him away. . . . Miss Hoar says that persons about Mr. Emerson so generally echo him, that it is refreshing to him to find this perfect individual, all himself and nobody else."

The two men seem to have read little of each other's work. Emerson had published the first volume of his

*Essays* and was preparing the second, but Hawthorne mentions neither. Emerson, who rather astonishingly, in his letter of condolence to Sophia after Hawthorne's death, said he had always been "sternly disappointed" in her husband's "performances," to which the author seemed superior, remarked in his own journal that these performances were "not good for anything." When Elizabeth Peabody brought him "Footprints on the Sea-shore" he read it and decided that "there was no inside to it." This in a sense was true, for the "Footprints" was but a sketch, and Hawthorne had tried to keep it from having any insides. Had Emerson seen him at the center he doubtless would not have condescended to what he saw, but he would have been amazed and pained. Hawthorne himself seldom exposed this center—too seldom, in fact. Sophia seems not to have suspected its existence until *The Scarlet Letter* sent her to bed with a sick headache. But it was always there. It was there in Concord, even though happiness had buried it for a while. Nor was it this happiness that kept Hawthorne and Emerson apart. It was the genius of Hawthorne for unhappiness. The genius, that is, of his imagination, which when it was most alive dealt only in sorrow and guilt. In tragedy. Emerson had no theory of tragedy.

"Emerson," says Henry James, "as a sort of spiritual sun-worshipper, could have attached but a moderate value to Hawthorne's cat-like faculty of seeing in the dark." But it was worse than that. By an interesting coincidence, a few years before Hawthorne entered in his note-book the idea of a "darksome servant" who haunted his own estate, Emerson had entered in his Journal: "Write a sermon upon a house-hero, upon the hero to his *valet-de-chambre*; the ugly face that obstinate association of true

words and good acts has made beautiful." The difference is amusing rather than important. It means a little more that the battle of Concord, concerning which Emerson wrote a hymn, and indeed a fine one, was for Hawthorne nothing but a single dark incident which years later he was to build into his romance of *Septimius Felton*; a local boy, standing near the bridge, had killed a wounded British soldier with his axe, and this deed of barbarism, so inexplicable by itself, was never to let Hawthorne rest until he could set it in a larger picture where it made tragic sense. But the controlling difference between the two poets was as deep as tragedy itself. Emerson in his *Nature* had asked for a theory of "language, sleep, madness, dreams, beasts, sex," but not of tragedy. Even those others, except perhaps the first, he never got around to formulating. Hawthorne had them all the time, in whatever way tragedians have theories.

In *The Marble Faun* he was to have Kenyon realize that "an habitual intercourse with nature" such as Emerson recommended is good for "all ordinary cares and griefs," but that "her mild influences fall short in their effect upon the ruder passions, and are altogether powerless in the dread fever-fit or deadly chill of guilt." Even at the Old Manse, however, and long before, the author of "Young Goodman Brown" was one for whom the stubborn facts of life could not be made to look like fictions. If Emerson had read any of Hawthorne's great stories he would have supposed that their author was only pretending to take guilt and sorrow seriously; for to Emerson such matters as original sin were outmoded—"the soul's mumps and measles," he called them in 1841. Emerson sang anthems to Solitude, the very sound of whose name soothed him

and made him beam. It terrified Hawthorne, as in differing ways it terrified Melville and Whitman. Solitude for Hawthorne was not an idea, it was a fact with which he lived. He had lived with it in his chamber; more important by far, he had wrestled with it in his art, and he had not thrown it down. He would never throw it down, and he did not expect to. He knew it was more powerful than he; it was the dark angel whom no Puritan had conquered either; it was the vacuum of ennui and despair which no religion had ever filled—indeed, to recognize it was what religions were for. Hawthorne knew this, and knew that Emerson did not know it. That was why Emerson could get nothing out of him. The tales of Hawthorne tested every Transcendental theory and found it confused. The philosophy which congratulated itself upon having put the Middle Ages behind it was for Hawthorne like the modern clergyman in "The Christmas Banquet" who had "gone astray from the firm foundation of an ancient faith and wandered into a cloud region where everything was misty and deceptive; looking forward, he beheld vapors piled on vapors, and behind him an impassable gulf between the man of yesterday and today." Hawthorne has outlived that philosophy, however old-fashioned its apostles thought him then. It was an abortive thing at best, with no place to go. It was a dawn, says Henry James, without a noon.

Meanwhile Hawthorne was turning out more tales and sketches. At the end of 1841 he had notified Cornelius Mathews and Evert Duyckinck in New York that he would probably write no more stories—"at least, not like my past productions; for they grew out of the quietude and seclusion of my former life; and there is little probability that I shall ever be so quiet and secluded again. During

the last three or four years the world has sucked me within its vortex, and I could not get back to my solitude again, even if I chose." If life at the Old Manse was solitude, it must have seemed of another sort, for he wrote a good deal there, and wrote it easily—according to Sophia, with "reverent and patient" periods of waiting for ideas to come. The Manse itself was less often his subject than might have been supposed. The introduction to *Mosses from an Old Manse*, which in 1846 collected all of his recent pieces along with "Young Goodman Brown," "Roger Malvin's Burial," and others from the past, was not written until that year, when he was gone from Concord. At Concord he wrote to live—with as much uncertainty as ever, for now in addition to the regular difficulties there was a national depression, so that payment was slow—and because ideas came.

The sketches were as usual the weakest in idea. "The Old Apple Dealer," rewritten from the note-books, made what it could—a remarkable amount—out of a subject so negative that only Hawthorne would have tried it. He had seen an old man in the railroad station at Salem, and had been fascinated by the torpor with which "this almost hueless object" sat behind his tray of cakes, apples, and candy. There was as little to him as there could be to any man, for such strength as he possessed took the form of a "lifelong, frozen patience" which defied the most sympathetic, the most penetrating glance. Hawthorne's interest in nobodies never took him farther than this. By definition there was nothing to say, and with some wit he said it; that is all. "Buds and Bird Voices," taken in part from Sophia's note-book, did deal very freshly with natural things about the Manse; and "Fire Worship" protested

against the stoves that were coming in to replace in houses the open hearth. "A Book of Autographs" and "P's Correspondence" were hack pieces over which nobody now needs to pause.

But there were eight works of a new order—comprehensive allegories with all of society for their subject, and with as much satire in them as by the aid of Swift and Bunyan was possible to Hawthorne. In these serene years he wrote satire: against reformers, against progress, against politics and business, against the Transcendental and Unitarian optimisms, against complacency and superficiality of every sort. If the satires themselves are superficial, and therefore not among his characteristic works, it is true nevertheless that he put a great deal of effort into them and that he believed they carried his thought. They did, but it was the thought he was conscious of and entertained by, not the thought that mastered him against his taste and will, and that he rejected when he could. Here, with great vigor but with something lopsided in his fancy, he races through the world to arrange its parts in orders he thinks rational. "The New Adam and Eve" imagines Father Miller's Day of Doom to have come at last and swept the human race away; one man and one woman are then created to walk through the ruins and decide what was nature, what was art, in the life that had been lived. "The Hall of Fantasy" is Hawthorne's Voyage to Laputa; it is a survey of Projects, a cruise through country—contemporary country—where the Idea is "all in all." "The Procession of Life" sorts people into new classes according to new principles: physical disease, intellect, sorrow, crime, virtue, love, and the condition of being lost. "The Celestial Railroad," Hawthorne's nearest approach to Bunyan



and the most effective of these works, exposes the error of those who think that Heaven and Hell are no more, that evil is a superstition, and that the good life is a comfortable train trip made with no difficulty at all. The Valley of the Shadow of Death is conquered, these folks think, because they have piped its vapors into gas lamps. Vanity Fair is the whole of this new world, and nobody knows it. "The Celestial Railroad" was the most popular of the eight pieces; even Emerson admired it. "The Christmas Banquet" is less an allegory than a tale, for it returns to Hawthorne's old theme of the cold-hearted man whose life is but a series of shadows flickering on a wall; but in form it belongs where it is placed, since it reviews a host of other persons afflicted with the same spiritual fault. "Earth's Holocaust" assumes a vast bonfire in which everything that exists is to be burned unless its utility can be proved. The reformers, as one might guess, have a merry time stripping the world; but they cannot burn the human heart. "The Intelligence Office" sets up a desk in the city to which all persons come who are uneasy, anxious, or otherwise lost in life. "A Select Party," the least of the group, assembles to no interesting end a company of abstractions with names such as the Oldest Inhabitant, the Clerk of the Weather, the Man of Fancy, John Doe, Richard Roe, and Nobody. All eight satires are disappointing, despite their energy and their incidental insights, because Hawthorne, whatever other uses he had for irony, had no use for it here. He was not a satirist.

He was a writer of moral romances, and so his best work at the Old Manse was of the accustomed sort—not "The Antique Ring," a light piece of historical fancy, not even "Egotism; or, The Bosom Serpent," whose inward monster

that hisses and gnaws at the hero's heart is sufficiently terrible and yet all too simply an allegorical substitute for the abstraction Jealousy; not either of these, but four tales about artists in one of which Hawthorne came near to reaching his very top. "Drowne's Wooden Image" is the slightest of the four, though it has substance. A provincial wood-carver who turns out figure-heads for ships produces one masterpiece when love warms his hand; indeed it is more than a masterpiece, for the lady walks and breathes. "The Artist of the Beautiful," in which Owen Warland fashions a mechanical butterfly so delicate and beautiful that it cannot be told from a real one, is itself delicate and beautiful; and yet it is marred by an "ideality," almost inescapable in Hawthorne's time, which sets too much distance—a distance empty for lack of definition—between the ethereality of art and the "unimaginative sagacity" of the "hard, coarse world."

"The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter," the ideas for both of which were dredged up out of the note-books, are in a class by themselves among Hawthorne's Concord tales. The first of them was ready for him to write when he found the image he had been waiting for: a blemish in the form of a tiny hand that appeared and glowed on the heroine's cheek, "a crimson stain upon the snow" whenever she grew pale. The idea for the story had been that a man should try to perfect a person he loved, and in the attempt destroy her. Hawthorne took for his man a somewhat gothic scientist, an artist of the elements, whom he set to work in a laboratory such as only melodrama ever countenances. But the hocus-pocus surrounding Aylmer and his swarthy assistant Aminadab is transcended by the treatment of the love between Aylmer and Georgiana, his

beautiful wife and the subject of his fatal experiment. There was Hawthorne's true laboratory, and there in this case he beat out a relation between man and woman—a relation involving scruples and devotions of the rarest, most beautiful, and it would seem the most unreachable kind—with sensitive fingers which seem as we read to rest upon flesh itself.

Of "Rappaccini's Daughter" the same thing can be said, except that an increment of force has then to be recognized; for this is one of Hawthorne's greatest tales. Hawthorne confessed in "The Old Manse" that he had hoped to "achieve a novel" there, one that "should evolve some deep lesson and should possess physical substance enough to stand alone." The novel had to wait, but its heroine, Hester Prynne, was to be not unlike Beatrice Rappaccini; the two are sisters in stature and beauty, and in the mystery of their power. No other women in Hawthorne are like them; neither Zenobia nor Miriam is, nor certainly any of the slighter girls, whether brisk like Phoebe or languid like Hilda, for whom he showed such weakness. He had never seen any woman like Beatrice or Hester, and indeed no such woman ever existed; which is not saying that she is unreal. "Rappaccini's Daughter" is again about a scientist or artist who dares to go beyond the limits of nature; this time he is a magician of gardens who poisons not only flowers but his daughter who tends the flowers, and at last the young man, Giovanni, who loves her before he learns how saturated her body is with invisible venom. Rappaccini cannot understand why Beatrice thinks herself miserable at the end. "Dost thou deem it misery . . . to be as terrible as thou art beautiful?" She does so deem it because she is natural, as he is not. But the distinction of

Hawthorne is that he has known how to make her both beautiful and terrible, so that her death when she drinks the antidote is a doubly deep event. If "Rappaccini's Daughter" is a little inferior both to "Young Goodman Brown" and to *The Scarlet Letter*, the reason in neither case is that Hawthorne did less than he could with what he had. He had less. What he had was artificial, was magic which it is not compulsory to believe. We cannot disbelieve the discovery of Goodman Brown or the suffering of Hester Prynne. Also, Beatrice is but the passive victim of her father's art. She did not will to be a poison flower as Hester once consented to break the Puritan laws. She is not, that is to say, for all her beauty and power a tragic heroine.

"As to the daily course of our life," Hawthorne meditated in his note-book, "I have written with pretty commendable diligence, averaging from two to four hours a day; and the result is seen in various magazines. I might have written more, if it had seemed worth while; but I was content to earn only as much gold as might suffice for our immediate wants, having prospects of official station and emolument which would do away with the necessity of writing for bread. Those prospects have not yet had their fulfilment; and we are well content to wait."

This was in March 1843. A year later their first child was born, a daughter whom they named Una out of *The Faerie Queene*. The possibility of such an event had been one of the things that made them content to wait. Hawthorne was delighted with Una, and three weeks after her birth was including her in his calculations for the future. He wrote George Hillard on March 24th: "It will never do for me to continue merely a writer of stories for the

magazines—the most unprofitable business in the world; and moreover, even if there were ever so great a demand for my productions, I could not spend more than a third of my time in this sort of composition. It requires a continual freshness of mind, else a deterioration in the article will quickly be perceptible. If I am to support myself by literature, it must be by what is called drudgery, but which is incomparably less irksome, as a business, than imaginative writing—by translation, concocting of schoolbooks, newspaper scribbling, etc. If we have a Democratic administration next year, I shall again favor Uncle Sam with my services, though, I hope, in some less disagreeable shape than formerly. . . . God keep me from ever being really a writer for bread! If I alone was concerned, I had rather starve; but in that case poor little Una would have to take refuge in the almshouse—which, here in Concord, is a most gloomy old mansion. . . . People of experience in babies say she is going to be very pretty—which I devoutly believe, though the tokens are as yet hidden from my eyes.”

The next year, 1845, was their last in the Old Manse, but the reason for their leaving was not an “emolument.” The owner of the house wanted to live in it again. Meanwhile Sophia had become willing, as she wrote her mother in September, to surrender Paradise. “I have got gradually weaned from it . . . by the perplexities that have vexed my husband the last year, and made the place painful to him.” The perplexities were both financial and political. With all of Hawthorne’s friends rallying to help him, no position had been found. Bridge, for whom Hawthorne had been editing some notes of a naval adventure which were published in May as the *Journal of an African Cruiser*, came for a visit and brought Pierce. “Mr. Hawthorne,”

Sophia told her mother, "was in the shed, hewing wood. Mr. Bridge caught a glimpse of him, and began a sort of waltz towards him. Mr. Pierce followed; and when they reappeared, Mr. Pierce's arm was encircling my husband's old blue frock. How his friends do love him! Mr. Bridge was perfectly wild with spirits. He danced and gesticulated and opened his round eyes like an owl. . . . My impression is very strong of Mr. Pierce's loveliness and truth of character and natural refinement. My husband says Mr. Pierce's affection for and reliance upon him are perhaps greater than any other person's."

The talk of the three friends in the shed was among other things political. The post-office at Salem had seemed a possibility ever since 1840. If circumstance made it seem less so now, there was the Salem Custom House. But a surveyorship was not to be had for the asking merely. Hawthorne needed to be better known in certain circles. So, during the summer, Bridge invited to his bachelor quarters in the Navy Yard near Portsmouth, New Hampshire, not only the Hawthornes and their small daughter but "Senator and Mrs. Pierce and Senator and Mrs. Atherton, of New Hampshire, and Senator Fairfield, of Maine. . . . To make the reunion less formal, two of my own sisters and some Washington friends were included. . . . What with boating, fishing, and driving, and in the entire absence of formality, the visit went off smoothly, and its main object—that of interesting men of influence in Hawthorne's behalf—was attained. . . . The next year he was appointed Surveyor."

But the appointment was still six months away when the Hawthornes prepared in September 1845 to leave the Manse. A letter from Louisa in Salem said they would be

welcome in the house on Herbert Street, and suggested an ingenious arrangement of rooms so that the families might be happy together. Hawthorne was going back to the town he had never thought he liked. He was to be there five years, and they were not to be happy years. But for all their grimness they were to be his great years.

On October 7th he wrote to Bridge: "Here I am, again established in the old chambers where I wasted so many years of my life." By January 1846, Sophia had decided that "on many accounts" the arrangements at Herbert Street were undesirable. "Madame Hawthorne and Louisa," she wrote her mother, "are too much out of health to take care of a child, and I do not like to have Una in the constant presence of unhealthy persons. We have never let her go into Madame Hawthorne's mysterious chamber since November, partly on this account, and partly because it is so much colder than the nursery, and has no carpet on it. We cannot go to Boston to live, for it would not suit my husband's arrangements, and I would rather live in a tub than where he is not." Sophia was subscribing to a legend; she was even helping to create it. Also, she was having the humdrum difficulty of any daughter-in-law in close quarters with her husband's family.

They did go to Boston for the summer, and in June a second child was born there, a son whom they named Julian. When they returned to Salem they lived alone in Chestnut Street; but in September of the next year, 1847, they moved to Mall Street, into a house large enough to hold both families. "It will be very pleasant to have Madame Hawthorne in the house," Sophia now assured her mother. "Her suite of rooms is wholly distinct from ours, so that we shall only meet when we choose to do so. There are

few people in the world whom I should like or would consent to have in the house even in this way; but Madame Hawthorne is so uninterfering, of so much delicacy, that I shall never know she is near excepting when I wish it; and she has so much kindness and sense and spirit that she will be a great resource in emergencies. Elizabeth is an invisible entity. I have seen her but once in two years; and Louisa never intrudes."

Hawthorne himself had long since taken up his duties at the Custom House. Those duties, and the men in whose company he did them, are described forever in the famous introductory chapter to *The Scarlet Letter*. It was a life half droll, half dull. With the decline of the port there was little to do for even the most active man in this proud little building with its eagle over the entrance that looked out over the tumbled wharves. And Hawthorne was not an active man. He was not even, some said, a companionable man; he was sullen and silent. The chief clerk, Zachary Burchmore, could not have thought so, for he and Hawthorne became good friends; but most of the incumbents were superannuated, and although in retrospect Hawthorne was to find them amusing, and in "The Custom House" to make them immortally so, his days among them were quite as dreary as his days on the Boston docks had been. The worst thing was the torpor that attacked his mind. He relished nothing and wrote little. The house on Chestnut Street had been too small for him to have a study by himself, and so he never opened his desk there. He edited in 1846, for the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, from a manuscript sent him by Pike, some "Papers of an Old Dartmouth Prisoner," the work of one Benjamin Frederick Browne. And oddly enough he consented to take



charge of the Salem Lyceum; this man who believed so little in celebrities and lectures became involved in correspondence with Emerson, Thoreau, and others, coaxing them to the platform of his native town. Nothing he ever did was more alien to his character.

Then in the late fall of 1847 he began to write regularly, though with more difficulty than before, in his study on Mall Street. For the next year his note-books, as often was the case when composition lapsed with him or became hard to carry on, are particularly full. In March, for instance, he set down a minute account of Una and Julian at play; a frank account, too, as if he were studying infant specimens of a remote race. He loves them, but he sees them clearly. "Una has finished Grandfather's towel; and after some little glorification thereupon, betakes herself to playing ball with Julian. No; he seems to prefer me for a play-mate—for now he puts his hand to my chin, and turns my head towards him—saying 'Look.' Una runs about the carpet, with the springy motion of a young deer. Julian does not enjoy his usual happy temperament, this afternoon—wailing, squealing, scolding, and complaining, on the slightest provocation, or none at all—yet breaking into merry laughter with almost as little cause." In this year, however, Hawthorne managed to write his last sketch, "Main Street," and his last four tales: "The Snow-Image," "The Great Stone Face," "Feathertop," and "Ethan Brand."

"The Snow-Image" took him back to the vein from which such pieces as "Drowne's Wooden Image" had come; and he was to find it again in *The Marble Faun*. The subject is a mysterious work of art, a sculpture, into which life has unaccountably come. In the present instance

it is a little girl whom children make from snow, and whom their unimaginative father forces them to bring indoors by the stove lest she freeze to death. She melts instead, and the father is proved wrong; though he still does not understand what he has done. Once more Hawthorne mars his work by extreme assaults upon a man who has no fancy; it is always a sign of sentiment in him when he does so, and here that same sentiment overprettifies the children, though it contrives a nice magic with the snow-maiden they have molded. "The Great Stone Face" is sculpture again—nature's sculpture on a mountain, which the hero's whole life is dedicated to resembling. It is one of Hawthorne's best-known tales, but not one of his best. Very worthy, very noble, it is yet embarrassingly unreal. "Feathertop," taken perhaps from Tieck, is more like Hawthorne at his most intelligent. Sculpture is still the theme, but Swift has helped him find a tone of tartness, not to say an idea that fits the tone. Mother Rigby, the witch whose Dickon supplies her with the means of making a splendid scarecrow, may not know that she is illustrating the doctrine of clothes; but the empty gentleman she sets walking with his pipe is a perfect illustration of that doctrine, and she herself is one of Hawthorne's best witch-women.

"Ethan Brand" is probably the story of which Hawthorne wrote in December 1848 to a New York editor: "At last, by main strength, I have wrenched and torn an idea out of my miserable brain; or rather, the fragment of an idea, like a tooth ill-drawn, and leaving the roots to torture me." It was by no means a new idea, for in one guise or another it had haunted him through many years, and it had given him his greatest subjects. It was the idea of a

man whom an obsessive desire for perfection in knowledge or virtue or art has driven beyond nature, making him an accomplished but cold-hearted monster. Hawthorne's best tales are about this man, who will reappear for that matter in his novels: as Chillingworth, as Hollingsworth, as Westervelt. He is Aylmer and Rappaccini, and with some differences he is Goodman Brown, he is Reuben Bourne. As Ethan Brand, who pursues around the world the secret of the Unpardonable Sin, only to find in the end that he has committed it—in the search itself, and in the violence he has done to the souls of others—he rises to his highest stature in all of Hawthorne's works. The tale is justly celebrated, though it is not perfect. Too many evidences remain in it of Hawthorne's original intention to make it longer than it is; and the persons he puts into it out of the note-book he kept at Pittsfield and North Adams in 1838 do not particularly belong where they are placed. Yet the night scene at the kiln, the lost laughter of the hero returning to die, and the death itself—these are tremendous things, and Hawthorne nowhere else accomplished their like.

If Hawthorne could write "Ethan Brand" he was ready to write something even better. The time for his masterpiece had come, though at the moment he was the last man who suspected this. The year that followed was a time of nothing but anxiety and trouble. On June 8, 1849, he learned that he had been dismissed from the Custom House. Unknown to him, a group of men who either disliked him as arrogant or found him inadequate for their political purposes had sent a memorial to Washington asking that he be removed; and now he was removed. The leader of these men was Charles W. Upham, whom Hawthorne never for-

gave. Longfellow called him "a fat, red, rowdy chap," and Charles Sumner dismissed him as a "smooth, smiling, oily man of God." However just or unjust those verdicts, there was nothing for Hawthorne to do but go home and tell Sophia. They were poor again.

She had saved a little money in secret, and now she brought it out. She also said, to cheer her husband up: "Now you can write your book." Presumably this was *The Scarlet Letter*. He sat down to do so, but within a few weeks his mother became gravely ill, and on July 31st she died in his house after several ghastly days in which he had to watch Una and Julian, who understood nothing of what he felt, imitate their grandmother by "playing sick." The death of his mother shook him more deeply than he could explain to himself in his note-book. Elizabeth and Louisa, utterly lost, were to begin their separate, solitary lives. And he had *The Scarlet Letter* to finish.

"Mr. Hawthorne writes *immensely*," Sophia told her mother in September. "I am almost frightened about it." It had never been this way before. Also, he was ill—a circumstance to which he owed the appearance of one who was to solve all of his publishing problems thenceforth. For James T. Fields, of Ticknor & Fields, hearing in Boston of his illness, went to Salem and found him "hovering near a stove" upstairs in Mall Street. "We fell into talk about his future prospects," says Fields, "and he was, as I feared I should find him, in a very desponding mood. 'Now,' said I, 'is the time for you to publish, for I know during these years in Salem you must have got something ready for the press.' 'Nonsense,' said he; . . . 'who would risk publishing a book for *me*, the most unpopular writer in America?' 'I would,' said I. . . . 'What madness!' he

exclaimed. I looked at my watch and found that the train would soon be starting for Boston. . . . I pressed him to reveal to me what he had been writing. He shook his head and gave me to understand he had produced nothing. At that moment I caught sight of a bureau or set of drawers near where we were sitting; and immediately it occurred to me that hidden away somewhere in that article of furniture was a story or stories by the author of *Twice-Told Tales*, and I became so positive of it that I charged him vehemently with the fact. He seemed surprised, I thought, but shook his head again; and I rose to go. . . . I was hurrying down the stairs when he called after me from the chamber, asking me to stop a moment. Then quickly stepping into the entry with a roll of manuscript in his hands, he said: 'How in Heaven's name did you know this thing was there? . . . It is either very good or very bad—I don't know which.' On my way up to Boston I read the germ of *The Scarlet Letter*."

By February 4th, 1850, the book was done. Hawthorne wrote to Bridge that he had read the conclusion to *Sophia* the night before. "It broke her heart, and sent her to bed with a grievous headache, which I look upon as a triumphant success. . . . Some portions of the book are powerfully written; but my writings do not, nor ever will, appeal to the broadest class of sympathies. . . . There is an introduction to this book giving a sketch of my custom-house life, with an imaginative touch here and there, which may, perhaps, be more widely attractive than the main narrative. The latter lacks sunshine, etc. To tell you the truth, it is . . . positively a hell-fired story, into which I found it almost impossible to throw any cheering light."

The "main narrative" is the masterpiece we know.

Hawthorne had supposed it would need the company of other tales in any palatable volume, and when Fields convinced him it could stand alone, he still added an introduction to be safe. Hawthorne was never to understand what he had done in *The Scarlet Letter*.

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## The Scarlet Letter

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HAWTHORNE in England, hearing that Thackeray had read aloud the conclusion of *The New-comer* without any show of feeling, remembered a certain moment five years before. "I cannot but wonder at his coolness," he said, "and compare it with my own emotions, when I read the last scene of *The Scarlet Letter* to my wife, just after writing it—tried to read it rather, for my voice swelled and heaved, as if I were tossed up and down on an ocean as it subsides after a storm. But I was in a very nervous state then, having gone through a great diversity of emotion, while writing it, for many months. I think I have never overcome my own adamant in any other instance."

But another such instance had occurred, just six months earlier than this one, and he had set it down immediately in his note-book. It was when his mother lay dying in Mall Street. "I did not expect to be much moved at the time—that is to say, not to feel any overpowering emotion struggling, just then—though I knew that I should deeply remember and regret her. . . . Louisa pointed to a chair near the bed; but I was moved to kneel down close to my

mother, and take her hand. She knew me, but could only murmur a few indistinct words—among which I understood an injunction to take care of my sisters. . . . Then I found the tears slowly gathering in my eyes. I tried to keep them down; but it would not be—I kept filling up, till, for a few moments, I shook with sobs. For a long time I knelt there, holding her hand; and surely it is the darkest hour I ever lived.”

Neither that scene nor the scene of the reading is to be doubted; nor the puzzlement of Hawthorne at having been moved so much, at having lost his adamant. Even then it should be noted that tears were not the final sign in either case. Nothing is said of tears in the scene with Sophia, and by the deathbed it was not the sobs that mattered so much as the fact that they shook him. *The Scarlet Letter* shakes any reader to his roots for the very reason that it has sealed up, says Paul Elmer More, the fountain of tears. It is never sentimental, as Hawthorne sometimes was; it is more than moral, as he regularly was; it is tragic. And it is tragic as only a few great works have been. Henry James could remember “the little shudder with which people alluded to it, as if a peculiar horror were mixed with its attractions.” But that may have been in part because the subject was supposed to be daring, and in so far it signifies nothing. If the shudder was a true tribute to the power of the book, then it must have been less “little” than it seemed; or else, by the very fact of its being barely perceptible, it testified to the sort of success, so rare in American literary art, and rare anywhere, that comes when perfection is added to depth. At the same time, continues More, that the reader’s feelings are engaged to the full, his mind “is overwhelmed by a sense of the power and self-



restraint possible to human genius." The power is in Hawthorne's feeling, but then it is in his ability not to feel, or at any rate to do more than that. *The Scarlet Letter*, so passionate a work, has nevertheless, as James observes, a "passionless quality." Its author, though he is more moved than he has ever been, has not ceased to be "cold and ingenious," or to strive for an "elaborate imaginative delicacy." James finds in the book "an indefinable purity and lightness of conception, a quality which in a work of art affects one in the same way as the absence of grossness does in a human being." This for James is the secret of its "inexhaustible charm and mystery," and so it may be for anyone who sees in addition, as Trollope did, how merciless a moralist Hawthorne keeps on being, how relentlessly he lets truth punish these very people for whom his pity is so complete.

*The Scarlet Letter* is in a sense the last of Hawthorne's tales, and of course their climax. Afterwards, made ambitious by success, he planned novels and romances, and sought to enlarge his scope. His masterpiece, however, is this culmination, achieved at forty-five, of the narrower effort which for a quarter-century he had been putting forth. "It has about it that charm," says James, "very hard to express, which we find in an artist's work the first time he has touched his highest mark—a sort of straightness and naturalness of execution, an unconsciousness of his public, and freshness of interest in his theme." It was the last as well as the first time Hawthorne touched this mark, and as for the freshness of interest—there is mystery in that, for the theme was old. Hawthorne was doing again what he had done so many times that he thought he was weary of it. He could not have been, as he now discovered; but ex-

actly what had happened, to his mind and to his theme, neither he nor anyone else was wholly to know. It is not enough to speak, as he himself often did in other connections, of inspiration and grace, though neither explanation is bad. When he saw the Houses of Parliament in London he decided with some disappointment that the architect had "felt no power higher and wiser than himself, making him its instrument," and therefore had "missed the crowning glory—that being a happiness which God, out of his pure grace, mixes up with only the simple-hearted, best efforts of men." In "Drowne's Wooden Image" he had told how the sculptor in pine and oak had failed to find in himself "that deep quality, be it of soul or of intellect, which bestows life upon the lifeless and warmth upon the cold" until the day when, working "in a kind of dream" because "kindled by love," he wrought the miracle of a lady in wood who walked in mirth and fluttered her fan. All this is interesting and true, but to speak thus of *The Scarlet Letter* would be saying less than we know, for we know in detail the materials he is treating again, even for the hundredth time. The only thing we do not know for certain is how or why he suddenly converted them to greatness.

The persons of the tale were long since types to him, as were their souls' predicaments. The broken law, the hidden guilt, the hunger for confession, the studious, cold heart that watches and does not feel—no one of these was new. There was a new symbol, to be sure, though even that had lain in Hawthorne's memory for years. In "Endicott and the Red Cross," as early as 1837, he had written: "There was likewise a young woman, with no mean share of beauty, whose doom it was to wear the letter A on the breast of her gown, in the eyes of all the world and her own chil-

dren. And even her own children knew what that initial signified. Sporting with her infamy, the lost and desperate creature had embroidered the fatal token in scarlet cloth, with golden thread and the nicest art of needlework; so that the capital A might have been thought to mean Admirable, or anything rather than Adulteress." In 1844 he had entered in his note-book, evidently as the idea for a story: "The life of a woman, who, by the old colony law, was condemned always to wear the letter A, sewed on her garment, in token of her having committed adultery." And three years later, with or without the husband of such a woman in mind, he had made the entry: "A story of the effects of revenge, diabolizing him who indulges in it." Here was Roger Chillingworth, the familiar devil of the tales, supplied at last with a human motive; as here in Hester Prynne, the wife he had sacrificed to his learning, was a woman into whom Hawthorne could pour every feeling and idea he had about her sex. About sin, too; though in his third person, Arthur Dimmesdale, Hester's lover and Roger's victim, he had a still more perfect vessel for that purpose. It is Dimmesdale whom secrecy tortures; it is he who must confess and die. But Dimmesdale is merely one more ideal scholar in a procession that marches back as far as Fanshawe, merely one more sensitive man rendered helpless before the world. And yet not merely, for his intensity absorbs all of his predecessors and makes them pale by comparison; as Chillingworth surpasses each previous villain; and as Hester becomes a heroine, almost a goddess, into whom the character of every other woman in Hawthorne flows. Hawthorne's witch-lady is here also, in Mistress Hibbins; Hester's elf-daughter, Pearl, is a descendant both of the sweet children who fashioned a play-maiden

out of snow and of the fiend's infants who stoned the Gentle Boy; the dignitaries of the book, from Governor Bellingham down, are done in the august style of the provincial tales; and the familiar crowd of citizens, the feeling mob, has all of its old function, its double function of population and chorus.

The difference, at least so far as the three principals are concerned, is in the degree to which Hawthorne feels and honors them as individuals. Formerly his temptation had been to decorate ideas, to produce rhetoric about emotions, at the expense of the persons in whom he placed them. This had caused a certain coldness in the persons, over and above the coldness with which it became conventional for him to charge them. But worse than that, it meant a vagueness, a want of force, consistent with his practice of refusing to define the good or the evil—usually the evil—that was in them. Hawthorne had cultivated in himself a weakness for the abstract. Abstraction is necessary to narrative, but at a deeper level than any which the poet lets us see. It is what makes the people finally important and utterly exciting. But exhibited before our eyes, in the refractory medium of accident and character, of speech and deed, it distracts us so that we can neither believe nor feel. In *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne has at last found individuals who can hold all of his thought, and so naturally that even he forgets what his thought is. His thought can be of them, not what they signify.

This in part is because their predicament can state itself. It is simple, it is immemorial. An old scholar in England, already dehumanized by the abstruseness of his studies, makes the mistake of marrying a young wife. He sends her to America, to the Puritan colony of Massachusetts, with

instructions to live quietly until he comes. But he does not come until the day when she is being publicly exposed as an adulteress; for she has borne a child, and she will not name its father. She, Hester Prynne, must stand on the scaffold, holding the child, until her shame is thoroughly known; and ever after she must wear the letter A, embroidered in scarlet on her bosom. She recognizes him in the crowd but by a sign is enjoined to secrecy. Announcing himself as a physician, and taking the new name of Roger Chillingworth, he at first cares for her and the child in prison; then, when she is free to live whatever life she may in Boston, he settles down to a vigil not merely over her but over all the town, one of whose men is certainly her lover. Or was for a brief while, for now she is an outcast with only Pearl, her daughter, for company; except that she does embroidery for ladies, and except that more and more she becomes a dark angel of charity, doing good deeds silently among the stern folk who still despise her. Her lover, we slowly learn without being told, is the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, a young clergyman of fabulous erudition, piety, and personal beauty—a beauty which matches the still more powerful and splendid beauty of Hester herself. The two seldom meet, and when they do meet they are not alone; they communicate then, but only by looking into each other's eyes, or in words which no listener understands as they understand them. The one thing they do not tell is the truth, namely, that Pearl is Dimmesdale's child. He could prevent Hester's suffering, or he could share it, if words were possible to him. Since they are impossible, he suffers an agony which grows so awful that she, by telling, might somehow save them both. But she continues

to protect his name. As we become aware of this, so does Roger Chillingworth. The mysterious illness of Dimmesdale—mysterious to the town—is something he says he can treat, and so he becomes the minister's physician; he even lives with him, to make the cure more certain. The "cure" is both physical and psychological; Dimmesdale must reveal some secret he is keeping in his sick heart, or he will never be well. The secret, painfully revealed, is nevertheless no cure. Only Hester can cure her lover; as at last, meeting him in the forest with Pearl, she does. She tells him who his physician is; she unlocks his heart, so sorely closed these seven years; she even plans an escape for them to the Old World. Chillingworth is to prevent this escape, but in any case it would have been too late for Dimmesdale, who seizes the occasion of Election Day, when all the colony is present, to preach his final sermon and to make public confession of his sin. Doing so he dies, on the very scaffold where Hester had stood, and she is alone again. It is his immortal soul, not his temporal sanity, that has been cured; and even then the crowd, whose adoring members had supposed his long illness to be a sign that he was too good for this world, imperfectly understands his confession.

Such a synopsis leaves out a multitude of important things. *The Scarlet Letter*, brief though it is and barren of incident though it seems, is packed with pictures and events; real at the center, it is rich at every portion of its surface. But any synopsis serves to show that the situation of the principals is indeed concrete. Never before has Hawthorne dealt with stuff so solid; and never again will he be so able or content to let his people determine his plot. His plot in this case is his people.

Above all it is Hester Prynne, whose passion and beauty

dominate every other person, and color each event. Hawthorne has conceived her as he has conceived his scene, in the full strength of his feeling for ancient New England. He is the Homer of that New England, as Hester is its most heroic creature. Tall, with dark and abundant hair and deep black eyes, a rich complexion that makes modern women (says Hawthorne) pale and thin by comparison, and a dignity that throws into low relief the "delicate, evanescent, and indescribable grace" by which gentility in girls has since come to be known, from the very first—and we believe it—she is said to cast a spell over those who behold her; and this is not merely because of the scarlet letter, "so fantastically embroidered and illuminated," upon the bosom of her always magnificent dress. It is because of herself, into whom Hawthorne has known how to put a unique importance. Nor is this a remote, a merely stately importance. We are close to her all of the time, and completely convinced of her flesh and blood, of her heart and mind. She is a passionate woman whom Hawthorne does not need to call passionate, for he has the evidence: her state of excitement, bordering on frenzy, in the prison after her first exposure to the crowd—her "moral agony," reflected in the convulsions that have seized the child; her pride, her daring, in after days when she makes more show than she needs to make of the letter on her bosom, the symbol she insists upon adorning with such "wild and picturesque peculiarity"; her alternations of despair and defiance; her continuing love, so unconfessed that we can only assume it to be there, for the man whose weakness seems so little to deserve it; her power of speech, so economical and so tender, when at last she is with this man;

her sudden revelation that through years of loneliness she has not consented to let her soul be killed.

"I pity thee," says Chillingworth near the close, "for the good that has been wasted in thy nature." These are terrible words, for they express a fear we have had, the fear that this magnificent woman has lived for nothing; for a few days of love, and then for dreary years of less indeed than nothing. Hawthorne has known how to fasten this fear upon us—it could exist in us only if we loved her too—but he also has known how to make Chillingworth's words untrue. The life of Hester increases, not diminishes, in the bleak world whose best citizen she is. Nor is this done by Hawthorne at the expense of that world. He deplores the "dismal severity" of its moral code, and for all we know he is presenting Hester as the blackest sacrifice it ever offered on its altar. But he is not doctrinaire against the code. His Puritan world is in its own way beautiful. It fully exists, as Hester fully exists. If their existences conflict, then that is the tragedy to be understood. Hester, whose solitary thought takes her far beyond the confines of the code, is nevertheless respectful of the strength in it that could kill her were she not even stronger. She is not the subject of a sermon; she is the heroine of a tragedy, and she understands the tragedy. She understands it because Hawthorne does; because at the same time that he recoils from the Puritan view of sin he honors its capacity to be a view at all. Sin for him, for Hester, and for the people who punish her is equally a solemn fact, a problem for which there is no solution in life. There was no other solution for his story, given Hester's strength, Dimmesdale's weakness, and Chillingworth's perversion, than the one he found. Rather, as we read, it finds itself. And if the con-



clusion is not depressing, the reason is that nothing before it has been meaningless. This world has not been really bleak. It has been as beautiful as it was terrible; Hester's life has not been hollow, nor has her great nature been wasted.

The weakness of Dimmesdale is personal to him and a part of the story, whose power it magnifies rather than lessens. He is "tremulous," and he holds his hand over his heart—these are two facts about him of which Hawthorne keeps us constantly informed. So constantly, indeed, that we might grow tired of the information were it not so relevant to the agony within. His penances, which extend even to scourging himself until he laughs bitterly at the blood that flows, still do not give him peace. The blood comes, but not his soul, for there is no penitence. He tortures but cannot purify himself. And there is no man for whom purity is more important, no man who more loves the truth and loathes the lie. Yet he maintains the lie, and so diminishes his very existence. "It is the unspeakable misery of a life so false as his," says Hawthorne at one point, "that it steals the pith and substance out of whatever realities there are around us, and which were meant by Heaven to be the spirit's joy and nutriment. To the untrue man the whole universe is false—it is impalpable—it shrinks to nothing within his grasp. And he himself, in so far as he shows himself in a false light, becomes a shadow, or, indeed, ceases to exist. The only truth that continued to give Mr. Dimmesdale a real existence on this earth was the anguish in his inmost soul, and the undissembled expression of it in his aspect. Had he once found power to smile, and wear a face of gayety, there would have been no such man!"

He is redeemed for us only because his suffering makes him beautiful and because Hester continues to love him. He would be fantastic, he would be one of Hawthorne's figments, had she not loved him in the first place. We believe this because we believe everything about her, and understand how much distinction she gives the objects of her love. The explanation for her superior strength, which never shows itself more clearly than when "with sudden and desperate tenderness" she throws her arms around him in the forest, is not merely that she has had the comparative luck to live in public shame. We are convinced that she would have been strong in any case, with the wisdom not to pervert either herself or him. As always with Hawthorne's women, she has more courage than the man with whom her lot is joined. This was true of Dorcas Bourne, of Faith Brown, of Dorothy Pearson, of Martha Pierson, of Beatrice Rappaccini; it was even true, in *Fanshawe*, of Mrs. Melmoth and Ellen Langton; it will be true of Phoebe, Zenobia, and Miriam. Somewhere, if not in the New England of his time, Hawthorne unearthed the image of a goddess supreme in beauty and power; and this included, whether he planned it or not, erotic power. "Those words 'genteel' and 'lady-like,' " he said, "are terrible ones, and do us infinite mischief, but it is because (at least, I hope so) we are in a transition state, and shall emerge into a higher mode of simplicity than has ever been known to past ages." One of the reasons he set so many of his tales in the past must have been that there, and there only, he could find the women he wanted for his art. As early as 1829, in his sketch "The Canal Boat," he had written: "Here was the pure, modest, sensitive, and shrinking woman of America—shrinking when no evil is intended, and sensitive like

diseased flesh, that thrills if you but point at it; and strangely modest, without confidence in the modesty of other people; and admirably pure, with such a quick apprehension of all impurity." And as late as 1863, in *Our Old Home*, he was to assess his "dear countrywomen" as having "a certain meagreness, . . . a deficiency of physical development, a scantiness, so to speak, in the pattern of their material make, a paleness of complexion, a thinness of voice." Sir Peter Lely's Nell Gwyn, he decided, was "one of the few beautiful women" he had seen on canvas. Nor was the woman of his imagination's choice deficient in the mysterious powers belonging to her sex. D. H. Lawrence found these powers terrible in Hester, and supposed them so destructive of Dimmesdale that he died hating her. Hawthorne, a profounder psychologist, did not so protest against the might he recognized. He recorded it as true, and let it work. It seldom worked for him with such intensity as here, but it is present in all of his interesting tales—more mild, more submerged, in "The Wives of the Dead" and "The Great Carbuncle," but certainly present. It is why he can suggest in so few words that love exists between two persons, and can interest us so deeply in this fact; it is why, for instance, *The Scarlet Letter* is one of the great love stories of the world although it gives us no details of love. Hawthorne went to the center of woman's secret, her sexual power, and stayed there. For him it was not intellectual power. The women he considered, from Mrs. Hutchinson on, he never could praise if their minds had got the better of them. Hester threatens to become a feminist in the injustice of her solitude, but he saves her from that fate. "We may be sure," says Henry James,

"that in women his taste was conservative." It was more than that. It was classic.

Yet Dimmesdale, for all he lives exclusively in Hester's love, is a remarkable person in his own right. His haunted, emaciated, all but sanctified figure will never be forgotten by anyone who has seen it reeling through this ancient world which Hawthorne has known how to keep so dark and clear; so little, and yet so alive. Hawthorne liked nothing better than to discover a man with a hidden mind; especially, a mind that hid monsters. Dimmesdale, walking home from his one interview with Hester, becomes for that short while a comic figure, bursting with thoughts of impossible, irreverent revelations which remind us of those more somber ones that afflicted Goodman Brown. He can barely resist his ghastly desire to shout them out; he does resist, however, and becomes once more the tremulous man whom Chillingworth had tortured.

He is more a person than Chillingworth is because he is more simply and directly seen. Chillingworth is necessary to the tale, and convincing enough; but he cannot shake off certain articles of dress and look which for Hawthorne were literary conventions. He is that unreal thing, a villain; he is Archimago still, stooping as he walks. "A writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them, and making one little pause, with all its wreathed intervolutions in open sight. His face darkened with some powerful emotion, which, nevertheless, he so instantaneously controlled by an effort of his will, that, save at a single moment, its expression might have passed for calmness. After a brief space, the convulsion grew almost imperceptible, and finally subsided into the depths of his nature." This was when he stood by the

scaffold and recognized Hester Prynne. He had come there out of melodrama, and in melodrama he remains. If Hawthorne makes him acceptable nevertheless, the reason is the vitality of the whole world here envisioned; like Homer's world, it is sure enough on its foundation not to be weakened by appearances of the supernatural—in Hawthorne's case, of the diabolical. Chillingworth is the devil again. Yet at one point he is better than that. He is one man playing with another, hideously, in a fashion that since has become a science. Hawthorne could not have foreseen the science—which, being a science, is doubtless no longer hideous. But he described its process perfectly. The minister's physician "deemed it essential, it would seem, to know the man, before attempting to do him good. Wherever there is a heart and an intellect, the diseases of the physical frame are tinged with the peculiarities of these. In Arthur Dimmesdale, thought and imagination were so active, and sensibility so intense, that the bodily infirmity would be likely to have its groundwork there. So Roger Chillingworth—the man of skill, the kind and friendly physician—strove to go deep into his patient's bosom, delving among his principles, prying into his recollections, and probing everything with a cautious torch, like a treasure seeker in a dark cavern. Few secrets can escape an investigator who has the opportunity and license to undertake such a quest, and skill to follow it up. A man burdened with a secret should especially avoid the intimacy of his physician. If the latter possess native sagacity, and a nameless something more—let us call it intuition; if he show no intrusive egotism, nor disagreeably prominent characteristics of his own; if he have the power, which must be born with him, to bring his mind into such

affinity with his patient's, that this last shall unawares have spoken what he imagines himself only to have thought; if such revelations be received without tumult, and acknowledged not so often by an uttered sympathy as by silence, an inarticulate breath, and here and there a word, to indicate that all is understood; if to these qualifications of a confidant be joined the advantages afforded by his recognized character as a physician—then, at some inevitable moment, will the soul of the sufferer be dissolved, and flow forth in a dark but transparent stream, bringing all its mysteries into the daylight." The precision of this passage is a sign that Hawthorne knew everything about the burden imposed by secrecy upon the soul. Nobody misses this knowledge in him, early or late; nor misses his further knowledge that confession is the only cure. The same precision, however, warns us that man cannot be man's confessor, whether or not his motives are benign. Dimmesdale's confession is finally to Hester, but even that is not enough; it still must be to heaven, as—doubtfully and darkly—at the end it is. No such doubt darkens the figure of Dr. Johnson at Uttoxeter, or of Hilda in St. Peter's.

Pearl has for every reader some unreality too, though again the force of the whole tale is natural enough to contain her. She also has something of the supernatural about her; she may even be the devil's child. Something sinister in her, something unpredictable, equals her charm. She is sunshine in her mother's life, and yet her pouts and scowls, her frenzies and her furies, are not the least of Hester's desperations. Her behavior in the forest, when she insists that Hester don again the letter she has cast off, has more meaning than it has at other times. When it is meaningless, as it sometimes is, Hawthorne may be sup-

posed not to have absorbed well enough the notes he made about Una when she was a child of five in Salem.

Hawthorne, watching her then, had been struck by her eccentricity—"a wild grimace, an unnatural tone." She seemed "an unripe apple, that may be perfected to a mellow deliciousness hereafter," but that now was all "acerbity" and discord. "It seems to me that, like many sensitive people, her sensibility is more readily awakened by fiction than realities. . . . She is never graceful or beautiful, except when perfectly quiet. Violence—exhibitions of passion—strong expressions of any kind—destroy her beauty. . . . She plays, sits down on the floor, and complains grievously of warmth. This is the physical manifestation of the evil spirit that struggles for the mastery of her; he is not a spirit at all, but an earthly monster, who lays his grasp on her spinal marrow, her brain, and other parts of her body that lie in closest contiguity to her soul; so that the soul has the discredit of these evil deeds. . . . There is something that almost frightens me about the child—I know not whether elfish or angelic, but, at all events, supernatural. She steps so boldly into the midst of everything, shrinks from nothing, has such a comprehension of everything, seems at times to have but little delicacy, and anon shows that she possesses the finest essence of it; now so hard, now so tender; now so perfectly unreasonable, soon again so wise. In short, I now and then catch an aspect of her in which I cannot believe her to be my own human child, but a spirit strangely mingled with good and evil, haunting the house where I dwell."

These notes are somehow more convincing than their result in *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne in them is puzzled, not only by what he sees but by the nature of his response

—he is not sure he believes any of this, but he says it anyway, and doubtless hopes to forget it. For Pearl, since she exists in public, he has to be more responsible, yet his art does not show him how. Not wholly, that is. Pearl too has her fascinations, and some of them may stem from his very failure to forget the actuality of Una. At any rate, just as Chillingworth is more interesting than Hawthorne's other villains because we know why he behaves as he does—he is no mere monster of art like Aylmer, Rappaccini, and Ethan Brand—Pearl is Hawthorne's most interesting accident of nature because she is indeed so accidental; and because the fact of her being at all is so painful, so mixed a joy to the more important person, Hester Prynne, by whom she lives.

Something of the same sort can be said of the crowd in this book—the crowd, that “species of solitude” to which Hawthorne was so addicted. The crowd here is the whole of society, which when it appears, as Constance Rourke has said, “appears mainly as a mob under strong emotion.” Hawthorne has created other crowds, and in *The Marble Faun* he will set all Rome in carnival movement. He was bound to do so, lest his narratives ignore the hum of human life. Here, however, it becomes a roar. No crowd in Hawthorne is like this one, either at the beginning, around Hester's scaffold, or at the conclusion, on Election Day. Again the reason lies in the fierceness of its relevance to his individuals. Hester and Arthur Dimmesdale have all of life for their audience. They want no audience, yet they need one too. They have it, ironically, in this mob whose repulsive is equal to its attractive power.

But *The Scarlet Letter* contains still other persons, and they are chief among the number even though they have



no names. The protagonists of the tale are abstractions, and this time they are neither cold nor empty. Sin, Guilt, Isolation, Pride were not the husks of Hawthorne's thought, they were its deep, warm center, and here for once they operate as personalities, no less divine in their power because they are hidden from sight. The eight satires he had written at the Old Manse, the comprehensive allegories in which he surveyed the contemporary world and found it wanting, had not succeeded even with him. The contemporary world was worth that much of his attention, but he had scattered his fire; had even withheld it, out of a doubt that he knew where he stood. For he was of that world, and much of it he liked. He merely knew that it was wrong when it said with Emerson that self-reliance is a sufficient virtue comprehending all other virtues. "The world has done its best to secure repose without relinquishing evil." The man who could write this could see how little repose was in store for the complacent. He was certain that evil cannot be relinquished—that is, forgotten or wished away. It is the common human heritage, it is the one thing that makes all men, as men, alike. "In Adam's fall we sinned all." And if evil in its extreme forms makes men inhuman by isolating them from their brothers, so does arrogance of spirit. The Transcendental brethren worshipped solitude, which Hawthorne could see only as isolation. His hell, like Dante's, was cold and solitary, a wilderness where nothing blossomed but the will. A warmer world would be one in which men recognized together the ineradicable weakness and corruption of their nature. To him the Puritan world was warmer than his own.

Yet there was much about it that he disliked. It was dismal, it was confined; he would not have had it back. *The*

*Scarlet Letter* in no sense recommends it as a system of thought or a way of life. Hawthorne did not need to believe in Puritanism in order to write a great novel about it. He had only to understand it, which for a man of his time was harder. If it was not impossible for him, the reason is less his experience than his genius, and the fact that something of supreme importance had survived in his lonely thought. He was so alone, so aloof, because he found so few around him whose seriousness equaled his; and by seriousness he meant the real thing, a thing consistent with irony and love, a thing indeed for which comedy might be as suitable an expression as tragedy. If one were serious, one never forgot the eternal importance of every soul, and never doubted that the consequences of deeds, even of impulses, last forever. The Puritans had known this all too well, and their resulting behavior was at times abominable. *The Scarlet Letter* is saying so at the same time that it is revealing a world where tragedy and comedy are possible.

The conflict in Hawthorne of two worlds between which he hung, exposing the fanaticism of one, despising the blandness of the other, is not the least source of *The Scarlet Letter's* power. The book was and is a reminder to modern man, who still talks about his conscience, of where that conscience came from. For Hawthorne it came from a dark world where human injustice was done, but only because men fumbled in their understanding of justice. Justice itself was a form of fate; or, for Hawthorne, so it must seem to any mortal and therefore limited intelligence. To any man "the rickety machine and crazy action of the universe" must appear all but incomprehensible, as at times it did to Hester Prynne. She might have felt as Hawthorne did when at Florence he looked into the faces of Michel-

angelo's Fates; and came another day to look again. He remembered having seen an etching of them when he was a child, "and being struck, even then, with the terrible, stern, passionless severity, neither loving us nor hating us, that characterizes these ugly old women." It was like looking at the Sphinx, but he could look; and come to look again. For such an imagination the drama of guilt did not lose its drama by being terrible. As an artist he was committed to drama; which was why he could see so clearly the differences between men. He saw these differences in terms of the evil they did or did not recognize—did recognize, and so were warm in peace; did not, and so were merciless to those for whom concealment was impossible, or else were corrupted by the suppression involved in evil's "turning its poison back among the inner vitalities" of their souls. For such an imagination also there was no social gospel, of Brook Farm or of any other place, that could serve as a substitute for the simple act of recognizing that every soul, beginning with one's own, is sadly imperfect. Hester does good deeds, but in themselves they are not enough; they do not give her mind the rest it desires. In "The Custom House" Hawthorne even wonders whether the compulsion to do them had not made her at times "an intruder and a nuisance."

Out of such ideas as these, possessed for once by Hawthorne in the available form of a perfect balance, the force of *The Scarlet Letter* surely derives. He was an artist, and so he knew how to use the ideas; but it would be wrong to deny that he had them, as Henry James substantially does when he discovers in Hawthorne "no general views in the least uncomfortable." Hawthorne's "general views" were so serious, so profound, that they left him free to write

a tragedy. Duplicity is not denounced in Dimmesdale; it is comprehended, and so made terrible. If the views of Hawthorne did not extend to the understanding that the isolation of modern man—so much more awful than the solitude of the Puritan who at least was alone with God—is an isolation for which no cure exists, we have perhaps the reason for his failure to equal *The Scarlet Letter* in any subsequent effort. It was written, we may admit, with more feeling than thought—though with the deepest and most delicate feeling. We need not suppose, however, that it was done with tricks.

The structure of the tale is justly celebrated, and its economy, and its lighting—"densely dark," says James, "with a single spot of vivid color in it." That spot is not the letter A alone; it is the meaning this letter keeps, and the power it has to illuminate the soul of Hester Prynne. We see her with it at the start, stationary on the scaffold, and we see her beneath it at the close, stationary in her grave. The story moves rapidly, as fate moves, but through a series of tableaux in which everything seems to stand still. The scaffold is the scene to which Hawthorne always returns; it is the place where Dimmesdale, his breast torn open to expose the letter he also wears, a scarlet stigma branded in his very flesh, dies in Hester's arms. But midway of the tale, in the chapter called *The Minister's Vigil*, the scaffold has performed its supreme function. In the obscure night which swallows up the shrieks of Dimmesdale so that even if they were intended as confession they have failed, in the impenetrable darkness which fits his state so well, the minister has to stand, one after another, with the principals of the drama: with Hester and Pearl, and finally with Roger Chillingworth. For all its lack of light it

is more brilliant than any other chapter, though each of them rivals it in a different way. The ironies latent in certain early scenes where Hester and Dimmesdale, face to face in public, can only look into each other's eyes and communicate in words which no third person understands—these ironies, so pure and so immense, are dissolved in the forest scene where at last they are alone together, alone with only Pearl.

The four chapters devoted to this interview are more than brilliant; they are overwhelming, and they are the heart of the book. They are overwhelming because the speeches that adorn them can be so brief. "Art thou in life?" "Dost thou yet live?" "Hester, hast thou found peace?" "Hast thou?" "That old man!—the physician!—he whom they call Roger Chillingworth!—he was my husband!" "I might have known it. I did know it! . . . Why did I not understand? O Hester Prynne, thou little, little knowest all the horror of this thing! . . . I cannot forgive thee!" "Thou shalt forgive me! Let God punish! Thou shalt forgive!" . . . "I do forgive you, Hester. I freely forgive you now. May God forgive us both! We are not, Hester, the worst sinners in the world. There is one worse than even the polluted priest! That old man's revenge has been blacker than my sin. He has violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart. Thou and I, Hester, never did so!" "Never, never! What we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so! We said so to each other! Hast thou forgotten it?" "Hush, Hester! No; I have not forgotten!" This is still the high mark in American fiction—this, and many another moment before or after. For *The Scarlet Letter*, like any masterpiece, is powerful everywhere and all the time. If its scene is bleak, itself is blended

of the richest, most moving, most splendid things, put densely and inseparably together.

Yet Hawthorne doubted that it could stand alone, and so recalled the author of the sketches to write for him the introductory section which he called "The Custom House." It is the best of his works in the comic kind. It is witty, it is serene, it is detached—absolutely detached, thought Mrs. Fields, who noted almost with a shudder how he "described the ancient adherents of the custom-house service and the signs of decay in Salem with the terrible keenness and truth of one who had dropped there from another planet." It is detached even from himself, whom he discusses with the mock-intimacy he can make so charming. He even suggests that *The Scarlet Letter* had been no trouble to write; "a small roll of dingy paper," discovered upstairs in the Custom House, had provided "a reasonably complete explanation of the whole affair." He was never to admit how much his masterpiece had cost him, or to subject himself to such cost again. For one thing, he was through forever with the Salem that had caused it if any outward circumstance can be supposed to have done so. "Henceforth," says Hawthorne of his town, "it ceases to be a reality of my life. I am a citizen of somewhere else."

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## Heyday

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IN EVERY meaning of the word *The Scarlet Letter* was a success. Not only was it a great work; it sold well and was widely discussed—with praise in most cases, though there were those who damned its morality. Hawthorne was famous at forty-five; or at forty-six, for his birthday came three months after Ticknor & Fields issued the book. He had found the right publishers at last; fate, which for the moment may not have looked to him like three ugly old women, had jerked him, blinking, out of his obscurity; he was even making money. His finances at the end of 1849 had been perilously low. In January 1850, two weeks before he finished *The Scarlet Letter*, he had received in the mail a sum of money from George Hillard and others who knew of his plight. “I read your letter in the vestibule of the Post Office,” he wrote Hillard; “and it drew—what my troubles never have—the water to my eyes; so that I was glad of the sharply cold west wind that blew into them as I came homeward. . . . There was much that was very sweet—something too that was bitter—mingled with that same moisture. It is sweet to be remembered and cared for by one’s friends. . . . It is bitter, nevertheless,

to need their support. It is something else besides pride that teaches me that ill-success in life is really and justly a matter of shame. I am ashamed of it, and I ought to be. . . . Nobody has a right to live in the world, unless he be strong and able, and applies his ability to good purpose. . . . The only way in which a man can retain his self-respect, while availing himself of the generosity of his friends, is by making it an incitement to his utmost exertions, so that he may not need their help again. I shall look upon it so—nor will shun any drudgery that my hand shall find to do, if thereby I may win bread.”

Though Hawthorne was unable to repay Hillard’s loan until 1853, when he was in England—until, that is, he had an income from other sources than his writing—the immediate success of *The Scarlet Letter* encouraged him to believe that his practical problems were solved. At once his view of himself became more professional than it had been; he did for three years put forth his “utmost exertions”; and within these years he produced what for him was an astonishing amount. By the summer of 1853, when he sailed for Liverpool, he had published two more novels—romances, he preferred to say—and two children’s books; he had brought out *Twice-Told Tales* again, adding its famous preface, in the same year, 1851, with a new collection called *The Snow-Image and Other Twice-Told Tales*; and he had contributed to the campaign of 1852 a political biography. If seven years of silence followed this heyday of his talent, and if four further years were years of frustration and failure at the end of which he died of the desperation those things engendered, that belongs to the catastrophe, not the climax.

The somewhere else than Salem of which Hawthorne



and his family were now to become citizens was the town of Lenox, in western Massachusetts, where he had gone in October 1849 to look for a house. In April, a few days after *The Scarlet Letter* appeared, he wrote to Bridge at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where Bridge was still stationed at the Navy Yard: "My preliminary chapter has caused the greatest uproar that has happened here since witch-times. If I escape from town without being tarred and feathered, I shall consider it good luck. I wish they would tar and feather me; it would be such an entirely novel kind of distinction for a literary man. And, from such judges as my fellow-citizens, I should look upon it as a higher honor than a laurel crown." He thought he had been "exceedingly good-natured" in his treatment of the Salem people; more so, in fact, than those of them deserved who had "lied" him out of office. For these, he told Bridge, he still felt "an infinite contempt." "I have taken a cottage in Lenox," he went on, "and mean to take up my residence there about the first of May. In the interim my wife and children are going to stay in Boston; and nothing could be more agreeable to myself than to spend a week or so with you; so that your invitation comes exceedingly apropos. In fact, I was on the point of proposing a visit."

He visited Bridge; he spent the first two weeks of May alone in Boston while Sophia and the children lived with the Peabodys; and later in the month he moved with them to the little red house in Lenox—or rather, just over the line in Stockbridge—where they were to enjoy themselves for eighteen months. They were "the happiest family anywhere," he wrote George William Curtis the next spring, "in the ugliest little old red farm-house you ever saw." Sophia's letters to her mother from this house, which she

proceeded at once to decorate with flowers and works of art—"Crawford's sculpture, 'Glory to God in the Highest,'" "Apollo, whose head I have tied on," "Correggio's Madonna," and "Raphael's Transfiguration . . . over the ottoman"—attained new peaks of ecstasy. "I cannot possibly conceive of my happiness, but, in a blissful kind of confusion, live on. If I can only be so great, so high, so noble, so sweet, as he is in any phase of my being, I shall be glad. I am not deluded nor mistaken, as the angels know now, and as all my friends will know, in open vision." Hawthorne, who would have tolerated such talk in no other person, loved it in Sophia; though he never practiced its like himself. He confessed in a letter to Longfellow the next year that life in the Berkshires was beautiful but dull; "sometimes," he said, "my soul . . . becomes troublous and bubbulous with too much peace and rest." And there is a noticeable difference between his announcement and Sophia's of the birth of their third child, Rose, in 1851. Sophia wrote to her mother: "I am so glad you feel serenely about my little 'flower,' for it was a very great grievance to me not to tell you of such an expected happiness; but I did not want you to be anxious, and I thought it would save your fear if I should not let you know anything till I could write you that I had multiplied my powers of loving you by a whole new soul in a new form. . . . I do not see how this new Hawthorne-bud can be otherwise than a lovely and glad existence." Hawthorne wrote to Louisa in Salem: "You have another niece. She made her appearance this morning at about three o'clock, and is a very promising child, kicking valiantly and crying most obstreperously." That was the Hawthorne style.

Louisa and Elizabeth, lost without their brother, had taken up independent lives. Louisa, remaining in Salem with the widow of her favorite uncle, Robert Manning, wrote to Sophia in August 1850: "Give my love to Nathaniel. If he only did know how I want to see him—but it is not to be told how much." Elizabeth retired in the same summer to Manchester and then to Montserrat, on the sea near Salem, where she lived quietly with a farmer's family until she died on New Year's Day, 1883. She kept to herself, took long walks in the afternoon and evening, read much, and translated from Cervantes and other authors. In Manchester she surprised Louisa by going several times to church. "I was afraid," wrote Louisa, "she would forget herself and *speak in meeting*, but she only made up a face at me when I looked at her." Elizabeth wrote to her brother from Montserrat in 1851: "Your letter gave me an unexpected pleasure, for I really had but little hope of ever hearing from you again. . . . I thank you for your invitation, but I do not like to go further from home than I can walk. . . . There is a house in the Cove which I think would have suited you; you certainly must have been happier near the sea. I would never go out of the sound of its roar if I could help it." She was right in this last. Hawthorne, who had gone to the mountains because he thought they might be good for his health and that of his family, did miss the sea.

By November 1850 he was informing Fields of the new romance which he would call, after some search for a title, *The House of the Seven Gables*. "I write diligently," he said, "but not so rapidly as I had hoped. I find the book requires more care and thought than *The Scarlet Letter*; also I have to wait oftener for a mood. *The Scarlet Letter* being

all in one tone, I had only to get my pitch, and could then go on interminably. Many passages of this book ought to be finished with the minuteness of a Dutch picture, in order to give them their proper effect. Sometimes, when tired of it, it strikes me that the whole is an absurdity from beginning to end; but the fact is, in writing a romance, a man is always, or always ought to be, careering on the utmost verge of a precipitous absurdity, and the skill lies in coming as close as possible, without actually tumbling over. My prevailing idea is, that the book ought to succeed better than *The Scarlet Letter*, though I have no idea that it will." After finishing it in 1851 he wrote to Bridge: "*The House of the Seven Gables*, in my opinion, is better than *The Scarlet Letter*. . . . I think it a work more characteristic of my mind, and more proper and natural for me to write." The one fear he confessed to both Fields and Bridge was that the contemporary setting of the new book would seem inconsistent with its "romantic improbabilities." "I don't believe it will take like the former one. The preliminary chapter was what gave *The Scarlet Letter* its vogue." But the book did take, even better at the beginning than its predecessor. If Judge Pyncheon was a portrait of Upham, as Louisa and others assumed, this mattered little in Salem and elsewhere not at all. Nor did it matter in the long run that there had once been a Pyncheon family in Salem, whose descendants now complained that Hawthorne wronged them. Hawthorne had known nothing of these Pyncheons, nor had he expected other families to believe he was caricaturing them. So many believed it, and said so, that by June 1851 he was writing to Fields: "I wonder if ever, and how soon, I shall get a just estimate of how many jackasses there are in this ridiculous world."

He was not seriously concerned. Had he not followed one masterpiece with another, and this in a single year?

In fact he had not quite done so. *The House of the Seven Gables* is his second-best book. Its charms are many, but Hawthorne was wrong when he told Bridge it was more characteristic of his mind, more proper and natural for him to write. The labor it involved was of a more pleasant sort, even if this meant care and thought; but the thought was not from the bottom of his mind. The "one tone" of *The Scarlet Letter* was the deepest, most dangerous, most painful tone he was ever to strike. It was natural for one of the two men in him—the man of the fancies and the sketches—to avoid striking it again, but it is tragic that this man succeeded. He succeeded in *The House of the Seven Gables* by lavishing all of his gift upon a picture. It was agreeable for Hawthorne to go patiently over the fine canvas he had found, and it will always be agreeable for readers to accompany him. A picture, notwithstanding, can never be a poem.

This picture is distinguished by the presence in it of one gaunt, unforgettable figure. Hepzibah Pyncheon might have been the result of Hawthorne's imagining what Elizabeth would be like when she was old, assuming that her family was rich and had lived forever in a great house of their own. Hepzibah and her house have long outlived their meaning without having lost their power to move the beholder. The Pyncheon family is under a curse—not only the specific one laid upon it long ago by Matthew Maule, the victim of Colonel Pyncheon's cupidity, but the more general one which Hawthorne for several years had been aware of whenever he considered, as he was pleased to do, the decay even in America, and indeed especially in Amer-

ica, of hereditary estates. It was a part of his democracy to do this, as in *The House of the Seven Gables* it was a part of it to correct the picture of Hepzibah and her house with dashes of new life in the form of Phoebe, an unspoiled country cousin, and Holgrave, a photographer who was counted on to represent in his modern ideas and his mechanical competence the coming age of America. Phoebe is the briskest and prettiest of Hawthorne's slight girls, and Holgrave—if only because of the way he opens the door for her after Judge Pyncheon's death—is worthy of her fresh, delightful person. But slight is what she is, and Holgrave never becomes clear, however eloquently Hawthorne writes sermons for him against the dead body of the past. Hawthorne is now trying to deal directly with the contemporary scene, and failing. He is trying to be a novelist, and he was never, at least in any familiar sense of the term, intended for one. Recognizing this, he slips back into romance—not into tragedy, where *The Scarlet Letter* had taken him, but into the sort of plot which permits Holgrave to be the last of the Maules, with an inherited talent for mesmerism, and which dictates that Judge Pyncheon shall die in the Dickens manner, his watch ticking longer than his heart does in a chair where Ralph Nickleby and Mr. Pecksniff might have sat as one man, his model. These things have the interest attaching to any ingenious plot, but ingenious plots were not the best thing Hawthorne was capable of. Lacking a great theme like that of *The Scarlet Letter*, he returns to his best here whenever he continues with the picture of Hepzibah and her house, and with the fainter, almost impalpable sketch he imposes upon it of Clifford, Hepzibah's pathetic brother, come back like a

ghost from the prison where Judge Pyncheon sent him years ago.

Phoebe first hears Clifford murmuring in the shadows of a room, and only gradually does she make out his figure there. Perhaps it never emerges, though something very painful does when it appears that he cannot bear, as time goes on, the ugly face of his old sister. He is a worshipper of beauty; Hawthorne suspects all such men, and sees that we pity Hepzibah all the more. Our pity for her when she opened the cent-shop, and was so ashamed of that blot on her gentility, as well as of its ever-shocking bell, was mingled with amusement. There is no amusement now, as there is none in the great train-ride the brother and sister take together when they have forgotten being estranged by Hepzibah's unfortunate squint. The two of them, with their house and its famous chickens, those attenuated fowl over which Hawthorne went with so fine a pencil, are the substance of the book. If they do little but stand still while time decays, we have again a reminder that Hawthorne, having become a painter for the while, has in so far surrendered his command of moving stuff.

His preface sports with the idea that there may be a moral buried in the book for readers to find. "The wrongdoing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief." He at once denies this, as he insists that he has not written the book merely to "convince mankind—or, indeed, any one man—of the folly of tumbling down an avalanche of ill-gotten gold, or real estate, on the heads of an unfortunate posterity, thereby to maim and crush them, until the accumulated mass shall be scattered abroad in its original atoms." Yet he would like

to have the words remembered, for he is not sure that his book is true if they are not true. He is still afraid of his "romantic improbabilities"—something which neither he nor any reader ever thought of in connection with *The Scarlet Letter*. *The Scarlet Letter* takes us beyond the limits of ordinary human nature, but only as tragedy does. Here in *The House of the Seven Gables*, when motion must be added to image, the best we can have is the hocus-pocus of a curse, and a mundane one at that. The deeds of *The Scarlet Letter* disturb the universe and reverberate to its darkest reaches. These deeds affect only one family's fortunes, and are crowned with happiness at last. Holgrave forgoes his modernity by marrying Phoebe and inheriting the estate. This conclusion is as feeble as the figure of Uncle Venner is. For even the main picture has its meager spots, and Uncle Venner is the most pigment-thin of those.

*The House of the Seven Gables*, notwithstanding all this, deserves its high place among American narratives of any time. Its atmosphere haunts the memory long after details of action have been forgotten; for being of the second order, they are necessarily forgotten. It is "pervaded with that vague hum," as James has put it, "that indefinable echo, of the whole multitudinous life of man, which is the real sign of a great work of fiction." Then too, in the style, there steadily glow "those ingenious and meditative musings," says James once more, "rather melancholy . . . than joyous, which melt into the current of the story and give it a kind of moral richness." The prose of Hawthorne, an invisible weapon with which he can slay all but our toughest doubts, is with him a secret almost as deep as his moral richness, and doubtless it was born with that. In *The House of the Seven Gables* it not only glows but



sounds. It is at once an inaudible weapon and the source of a music that moves us when nothing else does. "So much of mankind's varied experience had passed there—so much had been suffered, and something, too, enjoyed—that the very timbers were oozy, as with the moisture of a heart. It was itself like a great human heart, with a life of its own, and full of rich and sombre reminiscences." That is the house; and here is its chief inhabitant. "Forth she steps into the dusky, time-darkened passage; a tall figure, clad in black silk, with a long and shrunken waist, feeling her way towards the stairs like a near-sighted person, as in truth she is." Yet in no one sentence can the style of the book be wholly heard. It is everywhere and nowhere, like the feeling of its author. He has relaxed from *The Scarlet Letter* to enjoy a serener success. Not a saner one, for his wisdom among the Puritans, as someone has said, was that of a healthy man in a madhouse. But surely serener, for now he is in a curiosity shop, watching quaint personages of his own day.

One review of *The House of the Seven Gables* was written by a neighbor who lived six miles away, in Pittsfield. It purported to be an extract from the *Pittsfield Secret Review* but was in fact a letter—one of several great letters received by Hawthorne from this man. He was Herman Melville, whose brief blaze of friendship with Hawthorne is one of the major events in literary history. "We think the book," said Melville, "for pleasantness of running interest, surpasses the other works of the author. The curtains are more drawn; the sun comes in more; genialities peep out more." Hawthorne must have agreed with this, as he must have been pleased by the reviewer's praise of the picture he had painted—the book was called "a fine old chamber,"

abundantly furnished with "rich hangings wherein are braided scenes from tragedies." Melville was careful not to call *The House of the Seven Gables* itself a tragedy; he talked rather of its author's potentialities and implied powers. "We should like nothing better," he remarked, "than to devote an elaborate and careful paper to the full consideration and analysis of the purport and significance of what so strongly characterises all of this author's writings. There is a certain tragic phase of humanity which, in our opinion, was never more powerfully embodied than by Hawthorne. We mean the tragedies of human thought in its own unbiassed, native, and profounder workings. We think that into no recorded mind has the intense feeling of the usable truth ever entered more deeply than into this man's. By usable truth, we mean the apprehension of the absolute condition of present things as they strike the eye of the man who fears them not, though they do their worst to him. . . . There is the grand truth about Nathaniel Hawthorne. He says NO! in thunder; but the Devil himself cannot make him say yes. For all men who say yes, lie." When Hawthorne read these last sentences, smiling as he regularly smiled at their author's exuberance, he may have remembered Emerson in Concord and wondered whether Melville did not include that local saint among the "yes-gentry."

Melville's letter was less about the book, then, than about its writer, whose *Mosses from an Old Manse* he had publicly reviewed in 1850, just before he met this older man he was to love so much and praise so tumultuously. In that review, which more than repaid Hawthorne's notice of *Typee* in the *Salem Advertiser* four years before, Melville had seen as far into Hawthorne as anyone has seen. He

found there a "deep and noble nature" that spoke with a "wild, witch-like voice"; a "spicy and slowly-oozing heart," an "intricate, profound heart," full of such humor and love as exist only in "a great, deep intellect." But love and humor were merely the eyes with which this intellect looked sanely at the world. Behind those eyes, said Melville, there was "a blackness ten-times black," a "great power of blackness" that derived from Hawthorne's peculiar "calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. . . . Perhaps no writer has ever wielded this terrific thought with greater terror than this same harmless Hawthorne." Blackness "pervades him through and through. . . . Even his bright gildings but fringe and play upon the edges of thunder-clouds." "A strong, positive illustration" is the story of Goodman Brown, which is "as deep as Dante." Hawthorne is like Shakespeare, a master of the "Great Art of Telling the Truth." "In one word, the world is mistaken in this Nathaniel Hawthorne." As for Melville himself, the blackness in Hawthorne that so "fixes and fascinates" him has made all the difference to him that one mind can make to another. "Already I feel that this Hawthorne has dropped germinous seeds into my soul. He expands and deepens down, the more I contemplate him."

No wonder that Sophia thought the author of this review "the first person who has ever *in print* apprehended Mr. Hawthorne." And no wonder that when Melville began to haunt her little red house she predicted for her husband, "who particularly did not wish, for some reason, to be introduced to Mr. Melville," a growing interest in the man. "He will be repaid by finding Mr. Melville a very dif-

ferent man from what he imagines, and very agreeable and entertaining. We find him so. A man with a true, warm heart, and a soul and an intellect—with life to his fingertips; earnest, sincere, and reverent; very tender and *modest*. And I am not sure that he is not a very great man; but I have not quite decided upon my own opinion. . . . He has very keen perceptive power; but what astonishes me is, that his eyes are not large and deep. He seems to see everything very accurately; and how he can do so with his small eyes, I cannot tell. . . . It is a strange, lazy glance, but with a power in it quite unique.”

His eyes were not like Hawthorne’s, and there were other differences between them—Melville, for instance, was only thirty-two—but each of them had mingled in him somehow the genius of tragedy and the genius of comedy. Both were fierce and witty men. If the savagery in Hawthorne was so overlaid with civility that few persons ever saw it, the distinction of Melville is that he did see it and state it—overstate it, most readers of his review would have said. In any case he penetrated directly to the one thing in Hawthorne that finally matters, and that separates his few great works from all the others. Hawthorne had done his masterpiece, and Melville at this time was doing his. *Moby Dick* was to be dedicated to Hawthorne—Melville knew who had helped him write it. What kind of help this was, Hawthorne would have been the last to know. He wrote Melville a letter about *Moby Dick* which does not survive, but Melville in his answer calls it “joy-giving and exultation-breeding.” No letter of Hawthorne to Melville survives; which is a pity, not merely because Melville’s to him are so magnificent, but because if we had them we might know what we shall never know, namely, how much

pleasure was mixed with the bewilderment his new friend caused him. Hawthorne could scarcely have responded in kind to the all but frenzied addresses of this young genius who thought he had found in him at last the companion his soul desired. Doubtless Hawthorne did not expose his own soul; though there were talks together, over cigars when Sophia was away. Hawthorne recorded in his note-book that one of these talks, which "lasted pretty deep into the night," was about "time and eternity, things of this world and the next, and books, and publishers, and all possible and impossible matters." They went on expeditions together; and Melville, always so high-spirited, may have been bewildering, even embarrassing, to the middle-aged man of Salem who knew his way so poorly across the fields of ardor. To him they were antic fields which he avoided when he could. Which does not mean, as one legend has it, that he failed Melville. In the summer of 1851 Melville could still imagine that the two of them might some day "sit down in Paradise" with a basket of champagne and "pleasantly discourse of all the things manifold which now so much distress us." Their last mortal conversation was to be in Liverpool, and Hawthorne's report of it was to be melancholy. But there is no good reason to suppose that he utterly refused in the prime of their friendship to be the man Melville discovered. As for the further legend that he wrote "Ethan Brand" in mockery of this friend, the dates dispose of that; it was conceived before he had heard of Melville, written before he came where Melville was, and published before he met him.

Hawthorne may have hesitated to meet Melville out of a scruple lest he seem to be cultivating an admirer, but the reason could have been more general: he preferred, as

must now be clear, quiet friends. "People of high intellectual endowments," says Kenyon in *The Marble Faun*, "do not require similar ones in those they love." Hawthorne on the whole disliked literary company. He thought it threatened his independence; and at any rate he was more comfortable with persons of the ordinary world, unlettered persons who did not know or care how much of himself he concealed. His best friends were the most surprised by what he wrote. He lived another life with them, as far from Goodman Brown as affability could take him. He once wrote to Pike: "I wish you would come and see us; so does my wife, and so do the children. Come any time, the sooner the better, and stay as long as you please." He extended few such invitations. It pleased him more to have the Hillards at the Old Manse for dinner than it would have done to see the public bowing at his door. "I think all the better of mankind," he once told Ticknor, "for your sake." Ticknor was "at bottom a bookseller," but that was a recommendation. Hawthorne's loyalty to the friends of his choice was so stubborn that outsiders sometimes set it down as unintelligent. This loyalty was never known to fail. Once Hawthorne liked you, he could not cease to do so, even if you turned against him as Delia Bacon did. Intelligence had nothing to do with it. The gigantic intelligence of Melville may have been something that Hawthorne secretly preferred to view at a distance.

While *Moby Dick* was being finished Hawthorne was preparing to produce, not a masterpiece or even a near-masterpiece, but *A Wonder-Book for Boys and Girls*. In July 1851 he told Bridge: "Since the first of June I have written a book of two or three hundred pages for children. . . . I don't know what I shall write next. Should it be a

romance, I mean to put an extra touch of the devil into it, for I doubt whether the public will stand two quiet books in succession without my losing ground." To Fields he had said of the myths he proposed to treat: "I shall aim at substituting a tone in some degree Gothic or romantic, or any such tone as may best please myself, instead of the classic coldness, which is as repellent as the touch of marble. . . . Of course, I shall purge out all the old heathen wickedness, and put in a moral wherever practicable." There is a taint of professional swagger here, for the *Wonder-Book*, like *Tanglewood Tales* two years later, came out of a genuine feeling he had for both his subject and his audience. They are charming books. But of course Hawthorne was right. Without the old heathen wickedness and some touch of the devil they could be for him no better than minor works. He could mean what he said in 1853—"I never did anything else so well as these old baby stories"—and yet not mean it either. They remain his clearest tribute, or the *Wonder-Book* does, to the "beautiful and comfortable world" he inhabited for a while in Lenox, when his mind, like that of Eustace Bright, was "in a free and happy state, and took delight in its own activity, and scarcely required any external impulse to set it at work."

Hawthorne's devotion to the classical myths, which was deeper than his prefaces pretended, was natural in a man whose imagination had made itself so much at home in the regions of legend and morality. These regions are dim to most minds, and their boundaries vague; nor do their pathways run on to points of intersection. Not so for Hawthorne. This was the darkness where he saw best, nor was it darkness for him. The matter of his Greek tales, he knew, was "marvellously independent of all temporary

modes and circumstances. They remain essentially the same, after changes that would affect the identity of almost anything else." Of course he thought he had to make changes. "These old legends, so brimming over with everything that is most abhorrent to our Christianized moral sense—some of them so hideous, others so melancholy and miserable, amid which the Greek tragedians sought their themes, and moulded them into the sternest forms of grief that ever the world saw, was such material the stuff that children's playthings should have been made of? How were they to be purified? . . . But Eustace told me that these myths were the most singular things in the world, and that he was invariably astonished, whenever he began to relate one, by the readiness with which it adapted itself to the childish purity of his audience. The objectionable characteristics seem to be a parasitical growth, having no essential connection with the original fable. . . . Thus the stories . . . transform themselves and reassume the shapes which they might be supposed to possess in the pure childhood of the world. When the first poet or romancer told these marvellous legends (such is Eustace Bright's opinion), it was still the Golden Age. Evil had never existed." Which is bad history, and a sufficient criticism of *A Wonder-Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*.

Nothing might be more interesting than a book or a pair of books in which Hawthorne had treated the myths of Greece as maturely as he treated the Puritan myth in *The Scarlet Letter* and "Young Goodman Brown." How he could have done this for the children of his century is not for us to say. It was for him to do, and he did not do it; his narrator, Eustace Bright, and his several small listeners were not built to conduct or to receive the charge.



*Grandfather's Chair* steps down the Puritan myth with less loss, perhaps; yet the loss in that is noticeable too. A few of Hawthorne's works show us that he had the genius of the Greek tragedians whereby they moulded what was hideous, melancholy, and miserable into stern forms of grief which were no less beautiful for being stern. Here he does not use that genius. "The Paradise of Children" leaves the tale of Pandora untouched by any of the ideas we know he had about original innocence and original sin. "The Pomegranate Seeds" penetrates not at all the mystery of Proserpina and her mourning mother.

Yet both of the books have managed to survive the absence in them of what for Hawthorne was most serious. They are still bright with the lesser radiance he had at his command. "The Golden Touch" gives him full opportunity, of course, to restate his theme of the human heart—an organ which in King Midas's case goes from flesh to metal, then back to flesh, with a celerity that perhaps only Hawthorne could have made convincing. Hercules in "The Three Golden Apples" is a successful hero, as Mercury, whom we meet as Quicksilver, is in several of the tales a successful god. Baucis and Philemon, out of whose pitcher miraculous milk forever poured, could scarcely fail. The voyage of the youths to be devoured by the monster of King Minos, the sowing of the Dragon's Teeth, the tale of Circe, the adventure of the Golden Fleece—these are devitalized, and yet they keep their brightness. But the best thing in either book is the image of Pegasus which a boy shows to Bellerophon in the water of Pirene. "The young man looked down into the dimpling mirror of the fountain, and saw what he took to be the reflection of a bird which seemed to be flying at a great height in the air, with a gleam

of sunshine on its snowy or silvery wings." Pegasus, seen thus by indirection, justifies all the suspense Hawthorne has written into the story of Bellerophon's longing for this moment. "How hard a lesson it is to wait! Our life is brief, and how much of it is spent in teaching us only this!" Nor does the beautiful steed, when he descends to drink, disappoint our expectation. As delicate and strange as the unicorn in the old tapestry, he is something better yet: he is alive and wild. But he is waiting for Bellerophon to bridle him. And "to speak what I really feel, it was almost a sadness to see so wild a creature grow suddenly so tame."

After the pleasant effort of the *Wonder-Book* Hawthorne wrote to Fields, in July 1851: "I am going to begin to enjoy the summer now, and to read foolish novels, if I can get any, and smoke cigars, and think of nothing at all; which is equivalent to thinking of all manner of things." Twenty days of the summer are minutely recorded in the note-books. From July 28th to August 16th Hawthorne was alone in the red house with Julian and a pet rabbit, Sophia having left with Una and Rose to visit home. He missed Sophia acutely, and thanked God when she came back; much of the diary concerns her, whom he now calls Phoebe. Yet they were interesting days. On the first of August, for instance, "a cavalier on horseback came along the road, and saluted me in Spanish; to which I replied by touching my hat, and went on with the newspaper. But the cavalier renewing his salutation, I regarded him more attentively, and saw that it was Herman Melville!" That night was the night they talked of time and eternity and all possible and impossible matters. A week later Hawthorne went with Melville and others to see "these foolish Shakers" at Hancock. Their life now was "hateful and

disgusting to think of," because of its "utter and systematic lack of privacy," and its extinction seemed a thing to be desired. The rabbit amused Hawthorne. "I have gathered and crushed some currants, and have given Bunny his supper of lettuce, which he seems to like better than anything else; though nothing in the vegetable line comes amiss to him. He ate a leaf of mint today, seemingly with great relish. It makes me smile to see how invariably he comes galloping to meet me, whenever I open the door, making sure that there is something in store for him, and smelling eagerly to find out what it is. He eats enormously. . . . The mystery 'that broods about him—the lack of any method of communicating with this voiceless creature—heightens the interest." Bunny soon grew inconvenient and had to be given away, but Hawthorne missed him. His character had been "well worth observing"—as much so, perhaps, as that of many a person Hawthorne saw in Lenox. There was much company there besides Melville. There were the Tappans, from whom the red house had been rented; there was the actress Fanny Kemble, there was the novelist G. P. R. James; there was Catherine Sedgwick in Stockbridge; and since the entire region had become a place of literary resort, there were visits from Holmes, Lowell, E. P. Whipple, and the rest.

For all this summer's amenities, Hawthorne had begun to be bored by the Berkshires. Whether it was too peaceful in Lenox at last, or whether he missed the sea, or whether society here was too literary for his taste, he wanted to leave; and they all did so in November. Salem, it may be, was having its revenge. Hawthorne was never to feel at home in any place again; the monk, as Newton Arvin has put it, became a gipsy, a citizen of nowhere else.

His first hope was of finding a house near the sea. This failing, he went with his family to West Newton, near Boston, and spent the winter in the house of his brother-in-law Horace Mann, who had got elected to Congress and gone to Washington. West Newton was at best but a stopping-place; all the time he was there Hawthorne considered where next he might go. Within a month after his arrival Ellery Channing invited him to Concord, saying he was glad he had "evacuated that ice-plant of Sedgwicks, etc. . . . I have now a room at your command, where perhaps you might make yourself comfortable for a few days. Nobody at home but myself, and a prospect of strong waters. It is so damned near where you live that perhaps you would like to leave home—always a devilish bore to me, at any rate. . . . Emerson is gone, and nobody here to bore you. The skating is damned good. . . . Pipes and old tabac no end." When Hawthorne declined to come, Channing agreed with his customary grace. "As you are sweating Romances, and have got that execrable bore, a small family, it is all right."

The romance Hawthorne was sweating seemed even then the weakest of his works. Published in the summer of 1852, it was praised with reservations no one had made in the case of *The Scarlet Letter* or *The House of the Seven Gables*. Time has not removed the reservations. Browning for some reason preferred *The Blithedale Romance* to Hawthorne's other books, and Henry James thought its heroine, Zenobia, the nearest approach Hawthorne ever made "to the complete creation of a *person*." But the truth is that *The Blithedale Romance* has no outstanding virtue of any kind. What stands out everywhere in it is Hawthorne's doubt, which has returned in full force after three

years of rapid and confident composition, that he knows what he is doing. Few poorer novels have been produced by a first-rate talent. Only Hawthorne's talent is here, and it is apologetic. This shows in the distressingly pale character of the narrator, who is Hawthorne himself if anybody in his work ever was. Miles Coverdale not only tells his story badly—so badly that when he is not forcing scenes—he is suppressing them altogether, with the result that we do not know what the story is—but sports and luxuriates in the role of spectator until we lose patience with him much as Zenobia does when she catches him spying on her in her Boston hotel. To be sure it is Hawthorne who writes her denunciation of Coverdale on that occasion; but this does not save him from the charge of incompetence we bring. It is indeed his way of accepting the charge: a laudable piece of candor, but it comes too late.

*The Blithedale Romance* owes more to Hawthorne's experience, and to his note-books, than does any other narrative he published. This is precisely why it fails. He did not know how to use his experience. He knew only how to use his imagination, and in this case his imagination was absent or tired. The subject is Brook Farm, and the heroine is perhaps Margaret Fuller. Hawthorne always denied this, pointing to a passage in which Priscilla, not her more splendid sister, was said in so many words to resemble that intellectual lady. But Priscilla does not resemble Margaret Fuller; and if Zenobia in some aspects does—being eloquent, lofty, and proud—it still remains doubtful whether as a person in the book she lives. It is difficult to see why James thought she did. She is as much like Hester Prynne as wax-works are like women. Her beauty, so much insisted upon, is never felt; the flower in her hair is ineffective; and her

tragedy is trash. Neither the villain Westervelt with his false teeth—a singular degradation of Hawthorne's symbol of deformity in devils—nor the near-villain Hollingsworth with his cold reformer's heart is put into tragic relation with her; and the wispy Priscilla, whom she in turn victimizes in some fashion never clear, is as feeble a foil as Cleopatra would desire. But Zenobia is as little like Cleopatra as like Hester. The circumstances of her suicide, copied with few changes from a remarkable passage of the note-book Hawthorne kept at the Old Manse—he had witnessed there the drowned body of Martha Hunt, and recorded the experience with grotesque, relentless power—are not made relevant here, because nothing in Zenobia's death seems necessary. Certainly there is nothing morally terrible in it. So the mesmerism with which Hawthorne dabbles, though it is the best modern equivalent he can find for witchcraft or original sin, has none of "the devil" in it. Hawthorne loathed the spiritualist antics of his time, and more than once warned Sophia against them; but this does not mean that he has made them sinister in *The Blithedale Romance*. They are not so, just as Brook Farm refuses to realize itself out of the note-book he kept there. He was doing his best with the world he lived in, but so far it bewildered rather than reinforced his art. If some of the amusement he felt at West Roxbury creeps into this romance, and gives it a beguiling lightness here and there, this very lightness becomes a fault when we remember that we are supposed to be assisting at a tragedy. Coverdale keeps recommending the tragedy, and proving that it is real. But Coverdale is an ass, and tragedy needs no proof. In the same year with *The Blithedale Romance* appeared *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a work supposedly more crude. The

elegant crudities of Hawthorne are less forgivable than the forthright ones of Mrs. Stowe.

If Hawthorne was now to stop writing for seven years, the reason is not merely that he found other things to do. He had also to ponder the problem—a problem he had failed to solve in *The Blithedale Romance*, as he must have known—of how to make his imagination work upon the world about him. For better or worse, he was committed to that world; but *The Blithedale Romance* had been less contemporary than *The Scarlet Letter*, because less timeless in its force. It was dated as soon as born; it was—in no good sense of the word—Victorian. His labor henceforth was to be a search for some deep secret he never found. Or perhaps some shallow secret. It was a heroic search. It became a tragedy itself.

The beginning of the tragedy was not when Hawthorne tried a contemporary subject and failed. It was when he committed himself to that sort of subject; and he had done this long ago. Or he had doubted, which is the same thing, his right to be indifferent to the question of where his scenes ought to be set. They should have been set, as Shakespeare knew, wherever his imagination decided. But Hawthorne had never trusted the genius in him that kindled at the one point where ancient laws intersect present life. His genius was to that extent historical; but the man of the sketches was critical of the man who could be moved so much by a pink ribbon or a letter A worn two centuries before his time. He was not sure that his excitement over such a thing was a legitimate excitement, likely to infect others. When it did so, in the case of *The Scarlet Letter*, he was amazed, and refused to read meaning into the fact. He did not reprint "Young Goodman Brown" in

either volume of *Twice-Told Tales*, and he seems never to have recognized its superiority to the hundred other tales he wrote. He never mentioned it, in fact, unless he tacitly included it among his "blasted allegories." He was crippled from the first, as so many Americans have been, by a suspicion of his own imagination. It ought to be interested in something else—for instance, the manners of the moment, considered by themselves. *The Scarlet Letter* was about these too, but he did not know this. His great good fortune in being able to comprehend ideas that are neither old nor new, yet always are both, was to him a liability; it was even a curse. In "The Custom House" he wonders whether the fruit of his days in office should not have been a report of things seen there instead of a mouldy romance unearthed from an attic. And critics have shared the doubt. With all of living Salem before him, they say, he turned to a town that had been dead two hundred years. For him, as for any first-rate poet, the issue was unreal. Yet it continued to haunt him, and he died trying to solve the problem of how to get both subjects—the old life, the new life—into a single scene. The issue haunted him as it haunted the self-conscious America of his time. America has not ceased to be self-conscious.

The lesser problem of where to live after West Newton was solved when Hawthorne bought a house in Concord from Bronson Alcott, "the Orphic Sayer," and moved into it with his family late in May 1852. He thought he was pleased to be in Concord again, and announced that at last he felt at home. He never was, however, even there. Less than half of his remaining life was to be spent in the house he called the Wayside. His four final years there were restless in the extreme. They must have been so any-



here, but the Wayside was never the Old Manse. Paradise had not been regained.

On the eighteenth of June Hawthorne wrote to Louisa: "We wish you very much to come immediately. Our house not yet in order, but we can make you comfortable, and you do not come now, something may intervene to prevent your coming this summer." Louisa did not come at once, and so was never seen again. On July 14th she wrote from Saratoga Springs, New York, whither she went instead with her uncle, John Dike, that her train had "actually passed through Concord a little after eight yesterday morning—I hated to pass through without seeing you—but could not help it. . . . We may go home by way of Albany and down the Hudson to New York, but I hardly think we shall." They did start home by the Hudson, on the *Henry Clay*. But the ship caught fire, and Louisa, leaping into the river, was drowned. The next day, the 27th, Hawthorne's old friend Pike brought him the news. He took it, says Julian, "with his hands behind him, in his customary attitude, but with an expression of darkness and suffering on his face such as his children had never seen there before. Mr. Pike sat at the breakfast-table; but no one could eat anything, and no one spoke." After a while Hawthorne left the room and went to his study. They thought he had shut himself in, but when Julian, who was six, went to console him he was gone. He was on the hill," says Sophia—the hill directly behind the house where he was to walk so often by himself before he died—and according to Julian "was seen no more that day." Silence was the best service he could do this sister who had helped him edit the *Spectator*, who had washed the shirts he sent home from Boston, who had worried because he

worked so hard at Brook Farm, who had talked to his picture, who had reported to him the daily business of Beelzebub, who had been the first guest he wanted at the Old Manse, and who never, after he left her to be married, believed that he knew how much she still wanted to see him—"but it is not to be told how much."

The death of Louisa made it difficult, but finally not impossible, for Hawthorne to resume work on the *Life of Franklin Pierce* he had begun at his own suggestion in early June, as soon as he heard that the Democratic National Convention at Baltimore had nominated his friend for President of the United States. It was to be a campaign biography, and Hawthorne expressed doubts of his ability to produce a popular enough book for the purpose; but Pierce wanted him to write it, and he went ahead, finishing it in August. He insisted later upon its having been a pure work of friendship, undertaken with no preferment in prospect. It brought him the preferment of Liverpool, and this changed the whole course of his life, but in 1852 he may have counted on no such consequences. There are those, however, who believe he did, and deny him innocence in the affair. It matters little now that his motives cannot be known. One of them may have been personal gain, for his children were growing older, and he still doubted his power to support them with his pen. But certainly there were two other motives: his devotion to Pierce and his interest in the national politics of 1852.

His willingness to do anything for Pierce was unaccountable to many persons at the time, and it cost Hawthorne a good deal—which he cheerfully paid. Emerson thought him "unlucky in having for a friend a man who cannot be befriended; whose miserable administration ad-

mits but of one excuse, imbecility. Pierce was either the worst, or he was the weakest, of all our Presidents." This was written later, when Emerson remembered the indignation and pity that had been felt for one who defended the "perverse politics" of one so "paltry" as Pierce. Even Hawthorne, to whom Bridge had written in 1836 that Pierce had "no very remarkable talents," admitted to Bridge, after finishing the *Life*: "There are scores of men in the country that seem brighter than he is." The talents of Pierce, Hawthorne decided, were "administrative." "Frank has the directing mind . . . He is deep, deep, deep. But what luck withal! Nothing can ruin him."

His presidency ruined him with all but Hawthorne and a handful of others. Hawthorne, as it happened, loved the man; and so, this summer, found pleasure in writing about him. "I am taking your life as best I can—murdering and mangling you," he reported to his subject at the end of July. "God forgive me; as I hope you will." It was a pleasure to tell the world of Pierce's charm, his "fascination of manner" which few others in fact saw. "Few men possess anything like it," said Hawthorne in his opening chapter. "Its source lies deep in the kindliness of his nature, and in the liberal, generous, catholic sympathy that embraces all who are worthy of it." In a volume many of whose pages are stilted, this is not stilted, though to be sure it fails to make Pierce clear. Nothing Hawthorne wrote about him did this, save perhaps an entry in the Italian note-books for 1859. In 1853 he said to Mrs. Bridge: "I never knew or heard of a man at once so warm and so cold, so subtile and so true, as Franklin Pierce." The analysis is not enlightening. Hawthorne meant a remark he made once in Washington to an Englishman who was praising Lin-

coln: "I wish you could have seen Pierce too; you would have seen a real gentleman." But the Englishman did not know what he meant, nor do we.

The politics of Pierce, so soon to seem imbecilic to Emerson, were the politics of compromise. His reputation, such as it is, connects itself with his efforts as a northern Democrat to hold the country together between 1852 and 1856 by the expedient of leaving Southern matters to the South. "It was while in the lower house of Congress," says Hawthorne in the *Life*, "that Franklin Pierce took that stand on the slavery question from which he has never since swerved a hair's breadth. He fully recognized, by his votes and his voice, the rights pledged to the South by the Constitution. This, at the period when he so declared himself, was comparatively an easy thing to do. But when it became more difficult, when the first imperceptible movement of agitation had grown to be almost a convulsion, his course was still the same. Nor did he ever shun the obloquy that sometimes threatened to pursue the Northern man who dared to love that great and sacred reality—his whole, united, native country—better than the mistiness of a philanthropic theory. . . . It is this youthful sentiment of Americanism, so happily developed by after circumstances, that we see operating through all his public life, and making him as tender of what he considers due to the South as of the rights of his own land of hills." The New Hampshire candidate whose stubbornness recommended itself so naturally to his friend was, in the judgment of this friend, an "unshaken advocate of Union," a man pledged "to preserve and renew the old love and harmony among the sisterhood of States," a patriot "of the whole land," a "statesman of practical sagacity who loves his country as it is,

and evolves good from things as they exist." "And if the work of anti-slavery agitation, which it is undeniable leaves most men who earnestly engage in it with only half a country in their affections—if this work must be done, let others do it."

Hawthorne wound up his work with one of the worst guesses ever made. Both parties, he said, were now united in the desire "of preserving our sacred Union. . . . And thus men stand together, in unwonted quiet and harmony, awaiting the new movement in advance which all these tokens indicate." Nine years later the Civil War was in progress, and Hawthorne, who by that time had lost the affection he expressed here for his country as a whole, was nevertheless to be devastated by the event. Not that he ever surrendered his position. It was his position in 1852, partly because it was Pierce's and partly because he loved peace and distrusted reform. There is no reason to doubt that it was really a position. Hawthorne was not ignorant of affairs, nor was he indifferent to them. The unpopular side he took is perhaps more comprehensible now. At any rate he stuck as obstinately as Pierce did to a policy designed, he thought, toward the sensible end of preventing "the ruin of two races."

At the end of August Hawthorne went on a journey, first to Bowdoin, which wanted him there for its fiftieth anniversary exercises, and then to the Isles of Shoals, where he met the young poet Celia Thaxter. At Bowdoin, where his classmates looked to him like "dismal old fellows," he was too late to hear the speeches in praise of himself, nor did he deliver one of his own; he had been asked to, but had explained that his mind was "a little worn and paralysed by pretty constant use." The Isles of Shoals re-

freshed him so much that he wrote Sophia he now looked "twice the man he was," and when he returned on September 17th she agreed that the ocean had put him "in splendid health." Here he was again, she wrote her mother, "all safe and sound" after an absence of not quite three weeks, so that life for the rest of them could go on once more. "The children missed papa miserably, and I could not bear the trial very well. I could not eat, sitting opposite his empty chair at table, and I lost several pounds of flesh."

On October 18th Hawthorne wrote to Bridge: "In a day or two I intend to commence a new romance, which, if possible, I mean to make more genial than the last." This may have been the story of Agatha Hatch, a woman of the New England coast whom Melville heard about at New Bedford. She had married a shipwrecked sailor, and he had been unfaithful to her. The story was on loan to Hawthorne from Melville, who had once thought of writing it himself, and who now visited the Wayside to discuss it as well as other things impossible or possible. The tale of Agatha turned out to be impossible for Hawthorne; neither he nor Melville ever wrote it. No tale was possible once Pierce was President. Hawthorne had not only his own future to plan but the futures of others; for as the author of a campaign biography he was thought to be politically important, and was "besieged by office seekers." As for himself, he told Bridge, he had originally resolved to accept no office from Pierce; "but, to say the truth, I doubt whether it would not be folly rather than heroism to adhere to this purpose in case he should offer me anything particularly good. We shall see. A foreign mission I could not afford to take. The consulship at Liverpool I might."

The consulship at Liverpool was what he took. He did

his best to get another consulship for Melville, who needed money as badly as he did; but he failed in this. His own success meant the prospect of more money than he had ever had. It also meant living in Europe, and he was sure he wanted to do that. The appointment was made in March 1853; he went to Washington with Ticknor for two weeks in April, acquiring there the additional consulship of Manchester; and on July 6th he sailed with his family from Boston. Ticknor sailed too, as publisher, friend, and nurse, on the Cunard steamer *Niagara* whose guns roared a salute as it left the harbor. The salute was to the author of *The Scarlet Letter* and the United States Consul at Liverpool. A few days earlier this twofold man had written in his note-book: "I burned great heaps of old letters and other papers, a little while ago, preparatory to going to England. Among them were hundreds of Sophia's maiden letters—the world has no more such; and now they are all ashes. What a trustful guardian of secret matters fire is! What should we do without Fire and Death?"





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## Man Without a Country

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HAWTHORNE'S seven years in Europe solved only his financial problem, and even that problem was not solved for keeps, since the \$30,000 he made during four years in England was not in the end enough. If it seemed so at the time, and happily so, the artist knew what he was paying for his happiness—for a solution, that is to say, on the second level. The seven years were both rich and confused. The faithful consul, the patient sightseer, the indomitable traveler, the dogged compiler of note-books was always busy and interested; but he was puzzled, too, and a vacuum yawned in his mind, a vacuum he could not fill with activity and observation. What he wanted more than anything else was to feed his imagination: not only to see the Old World with his own eyes but to read reflections in it of the New, and out of all this to create a momentum that would carry him through many romances—or novels, perhaps—whose maturity would crown his career. The momentum was not generated. In his secret mind Hawthorne was never sure it had paid him to come.

Henceforth he was a man without a country in more

senses than one. The "whole land" across the Atlantic which he had celebrated in his biography of Pierce became a misty place; his thoughts about it could not find their equilibrium. He wavered between a disgust for its present politics and a desire to maintain its superiority over England; between a painful sense of its thinness as compared with Europe and a passionate hope that out of this thinness a density of the right sort would some day be achieved. But this uncertainty was not the worst symptom of deracination. The very responsibility he felt to cope with the entire social truth about Europe and America, about their past, present, and future differences, was itself a sign that his imagination had staggered. It was certainly weary. There was no country of the mind where he could be at home as he had been at home in ancient New England, or even in that modern one which had produced the sketches. The sketches were minor, but at least they were heart-free. It was proper that he should wish to transcend them now; but his effort was in the direction they had pointed, not in the direction—down to the depths of his own peculiar mind—which he had followed to the best result when he followed it at all. *The Scarlet Letter* transcended the sketches, in the way art always should transcend experience. Hawthorne once more was overwhelmed by his experience. The crowning romance he now designed to write was one that would absorb into itself the essence of Old England and New America. He could never write this romance. He put it aside to write *The Marble Faun*, but back in America it broke up into fragments he could not finish. His experience of England bore fruit in a beautiful book of sketches, *Our Old Home*, and nothing else.

It has been said that Hawthorne's pilgrimage to Europe

came too late in life to do him good. This is said on the assumption that every American artist benefits by crossing the ocean over which his culture came. It should be a question, not an assumption. Yet it is a real question, and it has been perennial—witness Cooper, Emerson, Mark Twain, Henry James, and T. S. Eliot. In Hawthorne's case the answer is by no means the simple one suggested by the fact that he went at forty-nine instead of twenty-nine, as Emerson on the first of his three visits did. If Emerson's view of Carlyle made all the difference in his case, it does not follow that Hawthorne had any such person whom he needed to see, or any such doctrine to develop in consequence. He was not a man of doctrine. He was a storyteller, and his strength was provincial. Such a genius, to be sure, may gain by putting distance between itself and its province; and if so, Hawthorne's long, lonely years of preparation need not have been so meager as they were. Whatever the moral, the truth is that his seven years did him less than the good he counted on them to do. And this in spite of the fact that he was always an occupied if never an eager alien, dutifully setting down in note-books every person and thing he saw.

Hawthorne, clinging to Ticknor who for three months would attend to the details, arrived with his family in Liverpool on July 16th, and at the beginning of August took up his consular duties in an office near the docks—a repetition of Boston and Salem, except that now the work was more important, more demanding, and for all its variety more depressing. The fine first chapter of *Our Old Home* describes it with higher spirits than Hawthorne seems in actuality to have felt. A consul sees his countrymen at their worst: in bad luck, and begging. Hawthorne was often

amused by the predicaments presented to him, but he was as often bored. He was patient and generous, even though he learned, as he says he had to, how to be hard. He soon made the acquaintance of two Englishmen, Henry Bright and Francis Bennoch, who lightened his days with good talk and kindness; but nothing quite compensated him for the fact that with all of England in his reach he was confined to one of its most dismal corners. He escaped when he could, to London and other places, and *Our Old Home*, rewritten from the note-books, is a record of his holiday excursions.

Meanwhile he had Sophia and his children for comfort—a precious comfort, as the note-books invariably acknowledge. When Sophia and the girls were away in Portugal for eight months during the winter of 1856-57, he and Julian made the best of it at Mrs. Blodgett's boarding-house, where Hawthorne enjoyed the company of sea-captains. But it was "the first great parting that we have ever had," and on the whole it left him miserable. For a good part of their four years in England the family lived at Rock Park, a few miles up the Mersey from Liverpool. Hawthorne spent his first evening in Rock Park beside a coal fire, thinking, "rather sadly, how many times we have changed our home since we were married. In the first place, our three years at the Old Manse; then a brief residence at Salem, then at Boston, then two or three years at Salem again; then at Lenox, then at West Newton, and then again at Concord, where we imagined that we were fixed for life, but spent only a year. Then this farther flight to England, where we expect to spend four years, and afterwards another year in Italy—during all which time we shall have no real home. For, as I sat in this English house . . . on

the first evening of September . . . I felt that I never should be at home here." This was written the next day, when Hawthorne could not know that the feeling would last for life. Even in America he was not to be at home.

In this same September, six weeks after he began work as consul, Hawthorne had his first taste of something that neither amused nor bored him. "Some days ago," he wrote in his note-book on September 22nd, "an American captain came to the office, and told me how he had shot one of his crew, shortly after sailing from New Orleans. . . . As he described the event, he was in peril of his life from this man, who was an Irishman; and he only fired his pistol, when the man was coming upon him with a knife in one hand, and some other weapon of offence in the other—the captain, at the same time, struggling with one or two more of the crew. . . . The shot struck him in the pit of the stomach, and he only lived a quarter of an hour. No magistrate in England has a right to arrest or examine the captain, unless by a warrant from the Secretary of State on the charge of murder. After his statement to me, the mother of the slain man went to the police-officer, and accused him of killing her son. Two or three days since, moreover, two of the sailors came before me, and gave their account of the matter; and it looked very different from that of the captain. According to them, the man had no idea of attacking the captain, and was so drunk that he could not keep himself upright without assistance. One of these two men was actually holding him up when the captain fired two barrels in the pit of his stomach . . . Both the seamen described the captain's conduct, both then and during the whole voyage, as outrageous; and I do not much doubt that it was so. . . . In my opinion, it is little short

of murder, if at all; but then what would be murder, on shore, is almost a natural occurrence when done in such a hell on earth as one of these ships, in the first hours of her voyage. The men are then all drunk, some of them often in delirium tremens; and the captain feels no safety for his life, except in making himself as terrible as a fiend. It is the universal testimony that there is a worse set of sailors in these short voyages between Liverpool and America than in any other trade whatever."

If Hawthorne was ever to be a reformer, the time was now. This was but one of many incidents of its kind which he was called upon to do something about; many other seamen came to him with broken heads and bleeding faces; a sickening number died, and he had to attend to their effects and funerals. The American merchant marine was diseased with mismanagement and brutality. He as consul had no power to correct the abuses; he could only care for the victims and make representations to the State Department. Sumner, whom he asked to take the matter before the Senate, did nothing; which meant, Hawthorne thought, that Abolition was the only cause Sumner could see. In time he sent memorials to the State Department, which exonerated him of any blame but failed to improve the situation he complained about. His complaint was not of the brutality but of the conditions that caused it—the caliber of the seamen, few of whom were Americans and many of whom had been impressed, and the inadequacy of the maritime laws. He even considered in his own mind whether flogging had not been misunderstood. "As in so many other instances," he dryly remarked, "philanthropy has overshot itself by the prohibition of flogging, causing the captain to avoid the responsibility of solemn punish-

ment, and leave his mates to make devils of themselves by habitual ill-treatment of the seamen." When he saw that his efforts met with indifference he dropped the subject. He had not the "itch of reform" that would have kept another man going in the face of failure.

But he continued to be aware of brutality and squalor. If the scandal of the maritime service seemed to him a blemish on democracy's record, here in the Queen's own country he saw poverty that matched it. It was a beautiful country, and Hawthorne loved its antiquity with an almost sensuous love; but he never missed the side-streets where scarcely human children waded barefoot in filth. He was to devote an entire chapter of *Our Old Home* to the spectacle, and the climax of this chapter was to be his account of a "sickly, wretched, humor-eaten infant" whom a gentleman visiting the West Derby Workhouse took into his arms when the infant insisted that he do so. "It could be no easy thing for him to do, he being a person burdened with more than an Englishman's customary reserve, shy of actual contact with human beings, afflicted with a peculiar distaste for whatever was ugly, and, furthermore, accustomed to that habit of observation from an insulated standpoint which is said (but, I hope, erroneously) to have the tendency of putting ice in the blood." The gentleman, we know from the note-books, was himself.

The gentleman was of two minds about England. Dedicated as an American Democrat, and as a sympathizer in some degree with the tenets of an unofficial party of the time called Young America, to the proposition that Western democracy was destined to sweep the world, he should have recoiled more than he did from the beauty and well-being he found alongside the slums and the blank-faced

poor. He did not recoil at all. He was too conscious of his own country's present faults.

"It sickens me to look back to America," he wrote Bridge in March 1854. "I am sick to death of the continual fuss and tumult and excitement and bad blood which we keep up about political topics. . . . We are the most miserable people on earth." The walls of Conway Castle made him exclaim in his note-book: "Oh, that we could have ivy in America! What is there to beautify us, when our time of ruin comes?" Sometimes it seemed to him that he himself was an Englishman, come home after an absence of two hundred and twenty-three years; his first American ancestor had left in 1630. There was "no harm," he admitted, "in believing that there has been something very good in English life." "The United States," he wrote Ticknor once, "are fit for many excellent purposes, but they certainly are not fit to live in." He was always moody with Ticknor, and said more than he meant; but he often said this sort of thing.

On the other hand he could be sick in England not only of his office but of the country itself, especially when its oldness palled upon him, and its weary efforts to preserve this oldness. The British Museum was for Hawthorne an unmitigated horror. Here was the very principle of antiquity—not merely British antiquity—stating and restating itself in every aisle. "The fact is," he said after a visit in September 1855, "the world is accumulating too many materials for knowledge. We do not recognize for rubbish what is really rubbish; and under this head might be reckoned almost everything one sees in the British Museum; and as each generation leaves its fragments and potsherds behind it, such will finally be the desperate conclusion of



the learned." In March 1856 he was there again. "I wandered from hall to hall with a weary and heavy heart, wishing (Heaven forgive me!) that the Elgin Marbles and the frieze of the Parthenon were all burnt to lime. . . . The present is burthened too much with the past. We have not time, in our earthly existence, to appreciate what is warm with life, and immediately around us; yet we heap up all these old shells, out of which human life has long emerged, casting them off forever. I do not see how future ages are to stagger onward under all this dead weight, with the additions that will be continually made to it." In November 1857, "the upper rooms, containing millions of specimens of Natural History, in all departments," made his heart "ache with a pain and woe" he had never felt anywhere else, and he fled the place. Such was to be his misery in every museum he entered, not to speak of the picture galleries still awaiting him in Italy. He went because his family did, and because he thought he ought to. Seeing the Old World certainly included seeing these proofs that it was old. He accepted the proofs, but sagged under their weight.

Yet he would go again, as in December 1857 he went once more to the British Museum; and saw—this really interested him—among the natural history specimens "immense hairy spiders, covering with the whole circumference of their legs a space as big as a saucer." He was to use these spiders in the fragments of his great romance. He was always planning that masterpiece, always collecting bits for it which he hoped some day to put in place. The grand plan of it was to be a comparison of hereditary England with republican America. Of that much he was sure, but he found it hard to fix upon details, to find images that

would contain his thought. The hero might be an American—himself, with differences—who crossed the ocean as the claimant of an immemorial estate. He was fairly sure of this; but only fantastic symbols offered themselves as fabric for the tale. The spiders were one such symbol. Another was the hair of Mrs. O'Sullivan's grandmother, which he heard about in 1854. Her coffin, opened after many years, had been "found to be filled with beautiful, glossy, living chestnut ringlets, into which her whole substance seems to have been transformed; for there was nothing else but this coffin-full of shining ringlets, the growth of half a century in the tomb." Another was Leicester's Hospital at Warwick, founded in 1571 and still functioning; twelve old pensioners still constituted the brotherhood of the place, twelve hospitallers in quaint tunics exactly like the tunics their predecessors had worn.

Another symbol—Hawthorne hoped it was the master one—offered itself in April 1855 when he was dining out and met the Ainsworths of Smithell's Hall. "The Hall is an old edifice of some five hundred years or so; and Mrs. Ainsworth says there is a bloody footstep at the foot of the great staircase. . . . Mrs. Ainsworth asked me to go and see the Hall and the footmark; . . . perhaps I may." He went in August and filled his note-book with what he saw—"a dark brown stain in the smooth gray surface of the flagstone" which might in fact be nothing more than "a darker vein cropping up" through the natural rock, but which might, if the legend were true, be "martyr's blood oozed out through his shoe and stocking," and still capable of oozing in certain circumstances. "Of course it is all a humbug," wrote one Hawthorne. But the other Hawthorne found the legend good, and listened attentively to

Mrs. Ainsworth's request that he "write a ghost story for her house." Until he died he was to try to do so. Meanwhile, here in England, he kept his note-book full of what he saw and heard, and indexed its pages because their number had so increased. Out of them, as from a gold mine, he surely would be able some day to dig his chief romance.

Yet he had a multitude of other concerns to keep the top of his mind busy. There were trips to Chester, to old Boston, to Stratford-on-Avon, to Abbotsford and the Scott country. He doubted the value of such pilgrimages as these last two, but he made them nevertheless, as he went to see where Burns had lived. London, with its relics of Dr. Johnson, interested him more. Of course he did not fail to visit Uttoxeter, where Johnson had done his penance, and to search for the very spot in the market-place where this great thing once happened. Painting he thought he got his fill of at Manchester, where in 1857 he visited the Arts Exhibition again and again in a conscientious effort to penetrate the mysteries of the art. He never did so, even in Italy where he was to see more paintings than he had dreamed existed. In Manchester he grew "weary of naked goddesses" and a little ashamed of them; he found he could really like only Murillo and the Dutch masters. One day he saw Tennyson there, and was tempted to introduce himself, but refrained. He was still shy of celebrities. He himself was one, he discovered, but he did not enjoy the experience of being praised to his very face. He wished he could. "It is ungracious—even hoggish—not to be gratified," he told himself in 1856; "but, then, it is really a bore, and one does not know what to do or say." He saw neither Thackeray nor Dickens, though he admired them both and would not have minded meeting them if it had

been easy to do so. The writers he met, mainly by accident, were of little importance to him or anybody else: Leigh Hunt, Martin Tupper, Richard Monckton Milnes, and the poet W. C. Bennett, a jeweler of Cheapside from whom Ticknor had bought a watch for Hawthorne to give Sophia. In July 1856 he did go to a literary breakfast in London which Monckton Milnes had arranged so that he could meet Macaulay, the Brownings, and other notables—"all people," says Hawthorne, "either of high rank, or remarkable intellect, or both." But he decided to walk from the station, got lost in "a very dirty region," and was nearly an hour late—too late to be introduced to the guests, who were already at the table. He gradually identified them, and he liked the Brownings—she "a small, delicate woman, with ringlets of black hair," who talked of spiritualism, and he a handsome, simple, agreeable, "gently impulsive" man who "spoke of his pleasure in meeting me, and his appreciation of my books; and (which has not often happened to me) mentioned that *The Blithedale Romance* was the one he admired most. I wonder why."

"We also talked," says Hawthorne, "of Miss Bacon; and I developed something of that lady's theory respecting Shakespeare, greatly to the horror of Mrs. Browning and that of her next neighbor—some nobleman, whose name I did not know." This was Delia Bacon, who had corresponded with Hawthorne as she corresponded with every likely person concerning the unpublished book whose theme so entirely possessed her. A few days later he called on her at her lodgings in Sussex Gardens and listened while "in a low, quiet tone" she talked, "as to the first friend whom she had met in a long while," about Shakespeare and Bacon. "Unquestionably, she is a monomaniac," he said;

"this great idea has completely thrown her off her balance." Yet he was impressed and moved. Perhaps he had no defenses against a solitary; for she was one, having been driven to seclusion by the refusal of the world to take her idea seriously. At any rate he decided to help her. He found a publisher for the book, contributed two hundred and thirty-eight pounds of his own money to the expenses of its printing, and when it appeared the next year, in an edition of a thousand copies, wrote a preface in which he praised the lady without in so many words supporting her theory. There is no evidence in this preface, or in the chapter on Delia Bacon in *Our Old Home*, that he ever read *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded*. It was a bulky, difficult book, and his interest did not extend beyond the author. She had become his friend, so he would champion her at any cost. The cost included her ingratitude. Bitterly disappointed by the coolness of his preface, she attacked him in letters which showed that at last she was going mad. She did go mad, but he never repented of his help; though he wrote to Ticknor, whom he had persuaded to publish the book in America: "I never will be kind to anybody again as long as I live."

In November 1856 Hawthorne saw Melville for the last time. Melville, on his way to the Holy Land, showed up at the consulate and stayed about Liverpool for a week, living with the Hawthornes "from Tuesday until Thursday." Hawthorne was embarrassed at first because he had failed to procure a consular appointment for his friend, but "we soon found ourselves on pretty much our former terms of sociability and confidence." Melville seemed paler and sadder than he had been at Lenox—a sufferer, Hawthorne thought, "from too constant literary occupations, pursued

without much success, latterly; and his writings, for a long while past, have indicated a morbid state of mind." When he came on Tuesday he carried "the least bit of a bundle, which, he told me, contained a night-shirt and a tooth-brush. He is a person of very gentlemanly instincts in every respect, save that he is a little heterodox in the matter of clean linen." He left for Constantinople with only a carpet-bag; "he learned his travelling habits by drifting about, all over the South Sea, with no other clothes or equipage than a red flannel shirt and a pair of duck trousers." He had moved from Pittsfield, had established his family in Boston, and was now on his way alone across the world. On Wednesday he and Hawthorne "took a pretty long walk together, and sat down in a hollow among the sand hills (sheltering ourselves from the high, cool wind) and smoked a cigar. Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had 'pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated;' but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation; and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief. It is strange how he persists—and has persisted ever since I knew him, and probably long before—in wandering to and fro over these deserts, as dismal and monotonous as the sand hills amid which we were sitting. He can neither believe, nor be uncomfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other. If he were a religious man, he would be one of the most truly religious and reverential; he has a very high and noble nature, and better worth immortality than most of us."

Nothing is more interesting about this passage than the absence in it of any reference to Hawthorne's own beliefs.

As Melville probably understood the term, he had none. He never went to church, and he avoided, even with himself, the sort of discussion Melville persisted in—with no pious accent, we may be sure. If Hawthorne entertained any dogma, nobody was aware of it. At the Old Manse he had written: "I find that my respect for clerical people, as such, and my faith in the utility of their office, decreases daily. We certainly do need a new revelation—a new system—for there seems to be no life in the old one." Unitarianism was for him no improvement upon what it had displaced. Rummaging on rainy days in the garret of the Old Manse, he had investigated the discarded volumes of a theological collection dating back to the days of Arthur Dimmesdale. The whole thing seemed to him a "stupendous impertinence," though he respected the old volumes more than he did the new. The old ones had "cooled down even to the freezing point," but they had once been warm; "the frigidity of the modern productions, on the other hand, was characteristic and inherent." In 1840 he had written: "Most absolute little Sophie, didst thou expressly command me to go to Father Taylor's church this very Sabbath? Now, it would not be an auspicious day for me to hear the aforesaid Son of Thunder. I have a cold, though, indeed, I fear I have partly conjured it up to serve my naughty purpose. . . . There is only one thing that I feel anyway inclined to do, and that is to go to sleep. . . . Will you promise not to be troubled, should I be unable to appreciate the excellence of Father Taylor? . . . I forewarn you, dearest, that I am a most unmalleable man." And now in England, though he took a pew in William Henry Channing's Unitarian church at Liverpool, and though he sent Julian every Sunday to occupy it, he never went himself.

The boy who at four had hated a bust of John Wesley so much that he poured water into it in winter, hoping it would freeze and burst, and who at seventeen had rejected the idea of becoming a minister because it was "so dull a way of life," was ancestor to this man who listened and found Melville strange. He was deaf to dogma—perhaps unfortunately so—but there was something about religion that he understood. He understood rather than believed, and understanding, did not wish to hear any further talk.

His work at the consulate, though he performed it faithfully for four years, grew more and more irksome. "I have received, and been civil to, at least 10,000 visitors since I came to England," he wrote Ticknor in July 1857; "and I never wish to be civil to anybody again." He wondered if the Wayside would suit him still. "I wish I had a better house to come home to at last. . . . And yet I don't quite like to think of giving up Concord; for my place there has many conveniences well adapted to my taste—especially the hill and wood behind the house, where I can take refuge from intruders at any moment; a privilege which I intend to use pretty extensively." It was only individuals he avoided. Mankind in the mass, in the crowd, he still enjoyed. He could never get enough of "the bustle of London, which may weary, but can never satisfy me." He had a passion for its "thronged streets," among which he deliberately lost his way so as "to find it the more surely." London, he said in *Our Old Home*, had been the "dream city" of his youth. But "I had found it better than my dream; for there is nothing else in life comparable (in that species of enjoyment, I mean) to the thick, heavy, oppressive, sombre delight which an American is sensible of,



hardly knowing whether to call it a pleasure or a pain, in the atmosphere of London."

The next best thing to London was the seventeenth-century England he looked for when he traveled: the England of his romance. It was hard to find, though guide-books and county histories helped him. Its citizens were scarcely these ruddy modern men and women he saw everywhere—an anomaly in the landscape of his fancy, like their poor brethren in the alleys. Matthew Arnold, reading *Our Old Home* a few years hence, was to remark that Hawthorne in England had been "perpetually in contact with the British Philistine." At civic banquets, where to his unending surprise he was able to make speeches, he doubtless sat among Philistines; but they were not the nameless people he relished in London and other cities, and certainly they were not the persons of his hereditary myth, the faceless, voiceless gentlemen—for try as he would he could not see or hear them—whom he pursued through the manor houses he went so patiently to see. If he could have found one such ghost he might have got ready to compare him with modern America in the flesh. He never found the ghost.

"I am weary, weary, of London and of England," he wrote in December 1857. Liverpool was now a "black and miserable hole." The whole island had lost its savor. Hawthorne was restless again with that restlessness he had ever envied in vagrants; was weary with "that weariness," he once wrote in his "Journal of a Solitary Man," "by which the soul proves itself ethereal." Fanshawe was a young man whose moods alternated unaccountably between intense excitement and dispirited gloom. Hawthorne had been such a man, and to a point had enjoyed the experience, even

reveled in it. In middle age, however, ennui was not so charming. It was more like being tired, it suggested rheumatism in soul and body. Really to be bored is not to be happy. Hawthorne hoped he would be happy in Italy, whither he started with Sophia and the children, and with Ada Shepard who was to have charge of the children, early in January 1858.

They went by Amiens, Paris, Lyons, Marseille, Genoa, Leghorn, and Civitavecchia, arriving in Rome a little before midnight of January 20th—"half frozen," says the note-book four days later, and "so ever since." After two weeks Hawthorne declared: "I have seldom or never spent so wretched a time anywhere. . . . One cold, bright day after another has pierced me to the heart, and cut me in twain as with a sword, keen and sharp, and poisoned at point and edge. . . . The atmosphere certainly has a peculiar quality of malignity." The family had long looked forward to this Italian year—it turned out to be a year and a half—but the beginning days were not propitious, at least for Hawthorne, who may never have been as eager for the experience as Sophia was. It was she, says Julian, whose capacity for sightseeing seemed "almost inexhaustible." Furthermore she could occupy herself with sketching what she saw. Hawthorne could only walk and look, and later make appropriate entries in his note-book. He did not warm to the city very soon. He was astonished by the sudden way palaces had of appearing "even in the meanest streets—though, generally speaking, one can hardly be called meaner than another." On February 11th he witnessed the Carnival, driving with Sophia and two of the children up and down the Corso on "as ugly a day, as respects weather, as has befallen us since we came to Rome."

He found very little to say for the spectacle; it was a crowd, but he was depressed by the absence of sunshine. The children enjoyed it more than he did. "Only the young ought to write descriptions of such scenes. My cold criticism chills the life out of it."

Maria Mitchell, the American astronomer, had traveled with the Hawthornes from Paris, and she saw much of them at Rome in this same chilly month. Sophia sometimes took walks with her, but Hawthorne "*never*. He has a horror of sight-seeing and of emotions in general." She liked him very much because he was "minutely and scrupulously honest." But he was "very taciturn," indulging at the most in "little sarcastic remarks." "He was a sad man: I could never tell why. I never could get at anything of his religious views." She thought he might not have been well, "he was so very inactive." "Generally he sat by an open fire, with his feet thrust into the coals, and an open volume of Thackeray upon his knees. He said that Thackeray was the greatest living novelist. I sometimes suspected that the volume of Thackeray was kept as a foil, that he might not be talked to." "Mrs. Hawthorne almost worshipped him," Miss Mitchell wrote; and added that Mr. Hawthorne once said to Ada Shepard: "I have yet to find the first fault in Mrs. Hawthorne."

Even then he was thawing out. His enthusiasm, slow to awaken at any time, soon became equal to the opportunity of Rome. The Carnival was to be remembered in *The Marble Faun* with none of the "cold criticism" he had deprecated in the note-book—indeed, his second experience of it a year later was to drive this first one quite out of his memory—and the city itself fascinated him in time as few things ever did. The ups and downs of his feeling with

respect to it were normal after all. On one day he could write: "Rome certainly does draw itself into my heart, as I think even London, or even little Concord, or old sleepy Salem, never did and never will." Then, six days later: "I hate the Roman atmosphere; indeed, all my pleasure . . . has already evaporated, and what now impresses me, as before, is the languor of Rome—its weary pavements, its little life, pressed down by a weight of death." This was after the family had returned from Florence, where they lived between May and October. On the way back, in Siena, Hawthorne had been particularly happy, and had written: "Really, if I could take root anywhere, I know not but it could as well be here as in another place. It would only be a kind of despair, however, that would ever make me dream of finding a home in Italy; a sense that I had lost my country through absence or incongruity, and that earth is not an abiding-place."

But his first spring in Rome was crowded with discoveries and events. The American artists expatriated there aroused his studious curiosity. William Wetmore Story, Cephas Thompson, Thomas Crawford, Maria Lander, and Harriet Hosmer were, like Hiram Powers later on in Florence, citizens of a colony whose spirit he worked hard to understand. They were happy abroad as he in a sense was not, yet he could doubt the gain they had made by leaving home. He watched them more closely than they knew, and sometimes admired their work more than he remembered to say, though he could think little of it too. He sat by while Story did his "Cleopatra," but spoke so seldom that not until *The Marble Faun* was published did Story learn how much this sculpture had impressed him. Meanwhile, of course, he was plodding through museums with Sophia

and pondering once more—this time with what seemed an infinity of examples before him—the mystery of art. Raphael displaced Murillo in his estimation, though in the end he was to be “utterly weary” even of Raphael. The Dutch masters maintained their high place. But he could not accommodate his taste to the nudity he beheld everywhere. Nudity in painting, and even more in sculpture, to him—as James has said—was accident, not essence. People in life are never seen without clothes; why then should they be naked in art? He made an exception at Florence of the Venus di Medici, but exceptions were rare. He continued to be puzzled, as he continued to suspect that galleries were a form of human torture.

Yet in this same spring he was unconsciously collecting the specimens he would soon fit into *The Marble Faun*. As early as February he saw not only Story’s “Cleopatra” but Guido’s portrait of Beatrice Cenci, and in the church of the Capuchins he saw the dead body of a monk out of whose nostrils blood suddenly flowed. On April 1st, in a special note-book he provided for the purpose, he started his English romance—the first of four starts he was to abandon before he died. *The Ancestral Footstep*, as this fragment is now called, went on with much wavering for seven weeks. Hawthorne tried again and again to focus the image of an American in England, come there to claim an ancient estate, but by May 19th he knew he had failed. He broke off because he was baffled, and because he was soon to go to Florence, but also because on April 18th he had seen the Faun of Praxiteles, and never since had been able to get out of his head the idea of writing a “little romance” about it. Meanwhile too he had seen the palace in the Via Portoghese where Hilda was to live, and the Tarpeian

Rock from which Donatello was to throw the victim of his sudden rage.

The summer at Florence was spent happily in two houses, the Casa del Bello until August, and then the Villa Montauto, a large and picturesque place outside the city, surmounted by a square tower like Donatello's tower at Monte Beni. Here Hawthorne began *The Marble Faun*, a sketch of which went rapidly and smoothly forward as *The Ancestral Footstep* had refused to do. It was interrupted only when the time came in October for the family to return to Rome. Hawthorne had made a good start at an Italian if not an English romance; and while in Florence he had made good friends. Hiram Powers, the sculptor whose vigorous mind played over not only the principles of art but the details of mechanics, consistently amused him; and the Brownings had been there. Robert Browning, as before in London, was hearty and sane, holding the same views of mediums and trances that Hawthorne did—"my inner soul," said Hawthorne at Montauto, "does not in the least admit them; there is a mistake somewhere." Elizabeth was no such skeptic. She was "a pale little woman, scarcely embodied at all; at any rate, only substantial enough to put forth her slender fingers to be grasped, and to speak with a shrill, yet sweet, tenuity of voice. Really, I do not see how Mr. Browning can suppose that he has an earthly wife. . . . She is a good and kind fairy, however, and sweetly disposed towards the human race, although only remotely akin to it. . . . When I met her in London . . . I was not sensible what a slender pipe she has. It is as if a grasshopper should speak. It is marvellous to me how so extraordinary, so acute, so sensitive a creature, can impress us as she does with the certainty of her benevolence. It seems to me

there were a million chances to one that she would have been a miracle of acidity and bitterness." This is one of many portraits of which the foreign note-books are full. If Hawthorne was puzzled by himself, he was clear about others. Motley the historian, who knew him in Rome as "the most bashful man I believe that ever lived," could not have guessed how shrewd his outward vision was. Bryant, for example, whom he saw in Rome and Florence, he set down as an excellent but negative, cold, old man who had never "sufficiently developed his emotional nature."

Hawthorne expected, upon his return from Florence, to go on with the sketch of *The Marble Faun* he had begun at Montauto, to expand it, and perhaps to make it into a finished work so that he could go home the next year. He did complete a first draft by January 1859, but Una's long and serious illness, commencing in October, had frightened and depressed him, and the result was nothing he could publish. For four months he made no entries in his note-book; then at the end of February we read how he and Una, coming along the Corso, observed preparations for another Carnival; and on March 7th he went with his daughter, now fifteen, to view the merrymaking from Motley's balcony. This second Carnival was more fun than the first had been. The day was sunny, and had it not been for his sober clothes he would have "bandied confetti and nosegays as readily and riotously as any urchin there."

On the tenth of March, "while we were at dinner, a gentleman called and was shown into the parlor. . . . Soon his voice grew familiar, and my wife was sure it was General Pierce, so I left the table, and found it to be really he. I was rejoiced to see him, though a little saddened to see

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the marks of care and coming age, in many a whitening hair, and many a furrow, and, still more, in something that seemed to have passed away out of him, without leaving any trace." Five days later Hawthorne decided that his friend was "singularly little changed; the more I see him, the more I get him back, just such as he was in our youth. This morning, his face, air, and smile were so wonderfully like himself of old, that at least thirty years were annihilated." He had no desire to be President again, yet he had "enjoyed it while it lasted." Perhaps he did not know how many people thought he had failed. He still seemed a unique person to Hawthorne—"so frank, so true, so immediate, so subtle, so simple, so complicated." When he left for Venice in April, Hawthorne could not go with him as he had hoped because Una was still a convalescent. He could only contemplate the pleasure and comfort Pierce had given him in Rome; for he had been of help in Una's illness. "Never having had any trouble before that pierced into my very vitals, I did not know what comfort there might be in the manly sympathy of a friend; but Pierce . . . has so large and kindly a heart, and is so tender and so strong, that he really did me good, and I shall always love him the better for the recollection of his ministrations in these dark days. . . . I have found him, here in Rome, the whole of my early friend, and even better than I used to know him. . . . I do not love him one whit the less for having been President, nor for having done me the greatest good in his power; a fact that speaks eloquently in his favor, and perhaps says a little for myself. If he had been merely a benefactor, perhaps I might not have borne it so well; but each did his best for the other as friend for friend." Faced with such a passage, no one can doubt the



depth of Hawthorne's feeling for Pierce, or the sincerity of his belief in the distinction of a man few others found distinguished. If the explanation is not in Pierce himself, as indeed it may be, then it is in the peculiar loyalty of which his friend was capable. This loyalty, kept living on all fronts, had expressed itself in Florence when Hawthorne suddenly remembered another Democrat he loved. "I wish it had been possible," he exclaimed, "for Raphael to paint General Jackson!"

The spring of 1859 passed for the Hawthornes in the expectation that they would sail for America in July, and on the writer's part that he would finish *The Marble Faun* within a month or two after resuming his life at Concord. He corresponded with Ticknor about changes that would have to be made in the Wayside, which as a house would not do in its present state but which as a symbol was not to be forsworn. "I am tied to it by one of my heartstrings, all the rest of which have long ago broken loose. . . . I am afraid I have lost my country by staying away too long."

But he ended up by staying in England another year and finishing *The Marble Faun* there. He left Rome with his family in May, lived for a while in London, and then between July and November, at Redcar on the Yorkshire coast and at Leamington, perfected his third draft. The English romance had been put aside, he did not know for how long. Of course he would write it in America. At Florence he had seen an old antiquarian and "necromancer," Mr. Kirkup, and a little girl, his adopted granddaughter. These were to come alive in Hawthorne's last fragment, *The Dolliver Romance*; but at the moment they were less present to him than the Carnival, the Catacomb of St. Calixtus, and Guido's Beatrice Cenci—"a being un-

humanized by some terrible fate, and gazing at me out of a remote and inaccessible region where she was frightened to be alone, but where no sympathy could reach her." All these, in the summer and fall of 1859, he was fitting into their sections of *The Marble Faun*.

*The Marble Faun* (or *Transformation*, as it is still entitled in England) was better received than *The Blithedale Romance*, but a vagueness in its conclusion—a vagueness Hawthorne did not substantially correct by writing several supplementary pages—prevented it then, and prevents it now, from matching *The Scarlet Letter*. It stands, with *The House of the Seven Gables*, high among his works of the second level. It has many beauties rather than one, as it has many morals whose sum is no substitute for a single meaning. He contrived, rather than was possessed, to write this tale of an innocent creature educated by sin. The idea is valuable, but since there are no innocent creatures it cannot be stated in a novel—even, by Hawthorne's definition, in a romance, for his romances never aimed at being unearthly poetry. In 1850 he had explained to Lewis Mansfield, who sent him a long poem to criticize, how it is that the very finest ideas need to be anchored in fact lest they drift off into the haze of the unverifiable. So in *The Marble Faun* he labored to build a real world about the central figure of his myth. The scene was Rome, and he wrote down Rome as he found it in his note-books. He did this so thoroughly that the book has been a Baedeker for generations of tourists. But the more of it he did, the more risk he ran that the abstraction of his myth should seem to be only an abstraction, irrelevant and uncaused. He never rose clear of the risk. *The Marble Faun* is still two stories—of an idea and of some people.

The idea is great and difficult. *Paradise Lost* fails with it too, and for the same reason. Woe comes into the world, and human nature as we know it is created. "The story of the fall of man!" cries Miriam. "Is it not repeated in our romance of Monte Beni? And may we follow the analogy yet further? Was that very sin—into which Adam precipitated himself and all his race—was it the destined means by which, over a long pathway of toil and sorrow, we are to attain a higher, brighter, and profounder happiness, than our lost birthright gave? Will not this idea account for the permitted existence of sin, as no other theory can?" Milton puts similar words into the mouth of an archangel, and he does not take them back; Miriam later on is moved to say, "I never did believe it!" But in both poems realism wars with truth; psychology, supposed to buttress theology, ends by undermining it, with the double result that we neither wholly understand nor simply believe.

Hawthorne asks us to believe that in our time—which is to say, in time—a young man exists who never participated in the Fall. He has yet to experience "sin, sorrow, or morality itself." He has "no conscience, no remorse, no burden on the heart, no troublesome recollections of any sort." He survives out of an age of fauns and nymphs before mankind was guilty of Rome. Hence he would seem to have "no dark future" before him. Yet his future darkens when he meets and falls in love with Miriam, a beautiful woman of our world whose past is gloomy with some secret guilt and whose present is haunted by reminders, in the form of a man who shares that guilt, of the fact that she will never be free. The faun-youth, Donatello, murders this man to make her free, but discovers then that he is bound not only to Miriam in the marriage of a secret

guilt but to the fate of all humanity, the fate of having henceforth to stoop under the burden of morality, to walk in the perpetual dusk of deeds remembered and regretted. The narrative ends when their penance has begun in the separate places to which confession has condemned them.

If we cannot believe this with perfect simplicity, the reason is partly that no long narrative could make us do so. It could be believed if it could be understood, but only parables induce such understanding. *The Marble Faun* is too long for a parable, too circumstantial for a myth. The circumstances are beautiful, and have their own reality, but it is not a reality that serves Hawthorne's high purpose. If his meditations concerning sin were never so complex before, or in themselves so interesting, it is all the more a pity that he complicates his plot to a point beyond which it can carry them. He contrives another couple, the sculptor Kenyon and the copyist Hilda, to reinforce his vision. They only ramify it. They are Americans, as it happens; he has done a "Cleopatra" like Story's, and she has Sophia's incapacity—a thing Hawthorne loved in his wife—to imagine evil; especially evil when it is mixed in one mind with good, for that, says Hilda, is "almost more shocking than pure evil." Hilda exemplifies yet another moral: the "discovery that sin is in the world" agonizes even innocent persons, and dooms them to the misery of an "awful loneliness"; "every crime destroys more Edens than our own." It is one of Hawthorne's minor triumphs that he saves Hilda from seeming to be a prig; but neither she nor the colorless Kenyon, a kind of Coverdale whose presence is necessary to the plot, in turn saves *The Marble Faun* from missing its lofty mark.

Many things are here that were in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Two solitary lovers are brought together by a guilt they cannot share with the multitude about them. The multitude, the crowd, exists in full force again: at Perugia, in the market-place where Miriam and Donatello meet—"and there they stood, the beautiful man, the beautiful woman, united forever, as they felt, in the presence of these thousand eye-witnesses who gazed so curiously at the unintelligible scene"—and at Rome where "the uproar of the Carnival swept like a tempestuous sea over the spot which they had included within their small circle of isolated feeling." This, like a hundred other things in *The Marble Faun*, is very fine. Yet the relevance is gone that read such terrible ironies into the Election Day of *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne's crowd does not recognize now the individuals it engulfs; if it sees them at all, it finds them "unintelligible." Hawthorne does not concentrate his power, as indeed he seldom did. He loses half of it, for instance, when he transfers the necessity for confession from one of his principal to one of his secondary characters. It is Hilda, tortured by her knowledge of Miriam's sin, who must go to St. Peter's, though she is not a Catholic, and pour out her secret to a priest. This is one of the most interesting moments in *The Marble Faun*, and it is rightly famous, among other reasons for its revelation of the extent to which the religion of Rome had come to fascinate Hawthorne; but it does not take place, as everything does in *The Scarlet Letter*, at the heart of the story. This story has no heart; its meaning is distributed, as its emphasis is vague.

Hawthorne damned those readers who complained of his mystifications, but the readers were right. We never learn what guilt it was that blasted Miriam before she came to Rome; we never see the face of the man who haunts her

there, or discover his relation to the unforgettable crime she cannot flee. She suffers fatally, as Zenobia does, from lack of definition. She is better than Zenobia because she is in a better book, but she is inferior to Hester because Hawthorne has not reduced her to clarity. He had not reduced his thought to the same indispensable point. That was why he needed to perform so many peripheral tasks; to write, for one thing, a guide-book to Rome; or simply to write—for *The Marble Faun* is beautifully written. We do not say this of the greatest stories.

Yet *The Marble Faun* has many rewards for the reader. If they are incidental, they are nevertheless splendid. Donatello on his tower, or in the forest where he utters his "wild, sorrowful cry" because the animals have ceased to trust him; Hilda in *her* tower, surrounded by white doves which as symbols of her purity might be ridiculous and yet are not—they are lovely, as she is in the same unaccountable way; the night scene at the Coliseum, the day scene by the Fountain of Trevi; the Carnival, and the rosebud thrown to Kenyon; the dead monk—these and dozens of other things as good have scarcely been surpassed among the embroideries of fiction. Also, Hawthorne has somehow mastered the delicate atmospheres of myth. Donatello's world is undefined, but the dew on it is fresh. Hawthorne himself seems unable to decide whether it is altogether well that sin has produced a world wherein "the entire system of man's affairs . . . is built up purposely to exclude the careless and happy soul." We are all, he says, "parts of a complicated scheme of progress, which can only result in our arrival at a colder and drearier region than we were born in." Not for nothing has he, a Puritan at heart, visited the pagan antipodes. The sweetness of this

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new world, but it is the oldest of worlds as well, both softens him and pains him. The result is a romance the very resonance of whose charm is consistent with its lack of resolution. Only one thing would have been better: the resolution, deeper than charm, which we call tragedy.





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## The Wayside in Wartime; Death

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WHAT shall we do in America?" Hawthorne, plodding through the Uffizi Gallery in 1858, decided that the gilt of its saloons was "perhaps another bore; but, after all, my memory will often tread there as long as I live." He ended by asking this question to which there was no answer, either on that day or on any day before June 1860 when he set sail with his family, and with Mr. and Mrs. Fields, from Liverpool for Boston. "As regards going home," he had written Fields in the spring, "I alternate between a longing and a dread." He told Ticknor in March: "I shall enjoy nothing till I have touched my native soil again." If Ticknor thought this inconsistent with other sentiments Hawthorne had recently expressed—"I shall never again be so free as I have been in England and Italy"; "I fear I have lost the capacity of living contentedly in any one place"—he at least was not surprised, for in seven years he had heard every conceivable sentiment from his author in exile. The romancer whose pride in his country made him a jingo at moments could at other moments grow savage and declare himself ashamed of America, whose inhabitants were "the

meanest and shabbiest people known in history"; or they were "the best people in the world—but it is a poor world." He had said such things whenever Uncle Sam, "the old scoundrel," seemed to lose interest in the financial fortunes of his Liverpool consul; or when something like a civil war, over slavery and the Union, seemed to be preparing. Except on low days Hawthorne could not believe that the nation whose democracy he so dutifully defended would commit the blunder of tearing itself in two. But there were plenty of low days; and as he sailed home he wondered if he had stayed too long. He was never to be sure he had not; he was never to lose a sense that England, his "real home," was pulling him back; he would always regret this, as something that took "the substance" out of his life; he would always be longing, like the people in his old allegory "The Intelligence Office," for Place and Peace.

The Wayside, whither he went at once, looked quite as small and poor as he had feared it would. He had wavered between wanting to see it again and "feeling no inclination to return." It was not large enough for his family now, nor was it in the least imposing when he remembered certain English and Italian houses he had lived in. The Englishman's house was indeed his castle—"an institution," Hawthorne had said, concerning which Americans knew nothing. Even as he said this he doubted "whether anybody is entitled to a home in this world, in so full a sense." Yet a home was what he wanted, and though he made alterations in the Wayside, some of them in the Italian manner, it never satisfied him. Among other things he built a little square tower above it, with a high room to which he could ascend and write. But the standing desk in this room he never used after its first trial, and the entire retreat turned

out to have a mortal defect: it was stifling in summer from the sun and in winter from the necessary stove. Also, it cost him four times as much as the carpenter had promised; which was serious, because he was not so well off as he had hoped to be. The thousand dollars he had paid toward the publication of Delia Bacon's book, the ten thousand dollars he had invested on the advice of John O'Sullivan and would never see again—by so much and more his decent fortune had dwindled. The worst thing, however, was that alteration had merely made the Wayside ugly. It was "the absurdest anomaly you ever saw," he wrote Donald Grant Mitchell. "If it would only burn down! But I have no such luck."

There were few times during the four years left of his life when Sophia did not have to confess that Concord—or something—was killing him. However much she missed him when he was away, she regularly sent him to the Massachusetts or the Maine coast for recuperation in summer from the effort that living had become. The death of Thoreau in 1862 removed a man who bored him as everybody did at times, but whom he genuinely liked. His own fame seemed to give him little pleasure. If Europe had left him less shy, as one of his townsmen said, it also had left him "less simple and agreeable." William Dean Howells found him "elusive"—not "wilfully" so, but possessed of an "apparitional quality." Neighbors who saw him on the hill behind his house, walking there alone and going "under cover like a partridge" whenever strangers came down the road, knew what this meant. It went with "those suspicious side-glances of his." It went too with the man whom the elder Henry James once saw in Boston at the Saturday Club, some of whose meetings Hawthorne consented to

attend. "Hawthorne isn't a handsome man, nor an engaging one personally," James wrote to Emerson. "He has the look all the time, to one who doesn't know him, of a rogue who suddenly finds himself in a company of detectives. But in spite of his rusticity, I felt a sympathy with him amounting to anguish, and couldn't take my eyes off him all the dinner. . . . The idea I got was, and it was very powerfully impressed on me, that we are all monstrously corrupt, hopelessly bereft of human consciousness, and that it is the intention of the Divine Providence to overrun us and obliterate us in a new Gothic and Vandalic invasion. . . . The old world is breaking up on all hands—the glimpse of the everlasting granite I caught in Hawthorne shows that there is stock enough for fifty better."

Such granite as Hawthorne had in his composition, and he had some, was far from everlasting, as he now knew better than anybody else. From the moment of his return to Concord he felt it dissolving. He summoned an amount of will which for him was remarkable and kept on writing in his square, high room; but something had doomed his hope and faith. He knew—and said so in "Browne's Folly," written at the Wayside in August 1860—that his mind had lost forever "the plan and measure of those little narratives in which it was once so unprofitably fertile." He must write to live, but short stories were out of the question. If two ambitious projects remained, he could put little heart into one of these. A book might be made out of his English notes. In 1857 he had sent an article on Uttoxeter to *Harpur's New Monthly Magazine*, and now he began the series of contributions to another new magazine, *The Atlantic Monthly*, which three years later he would collect under the title *Our Old Home*, a volume whose excellence he

underestimated. The second project was the only thing about which he could be serious. It lay at the center of his life, he thought, and on no account must it fail. It was the project of the English romance.

*The Ancestral Footstep*, Hawthorne's first attempt at this in Italy, had come to a stop because *The Marble Faun* interfered, but also because it was not going well. He started it three times, changing the names of his persons and recasting his incidents, without coming upon the tone he desired. The story would not make itself real. It began thus: "He had now been travelling long in those rich portions of England where he would most have wished to find the object of his pursuit; and many had been the scenes which he would willingly have identified with that mentioned in the ancient, time-yellowed record which he bore about with him." An American named Middleton, modeled in part upon the numerous countrymen of Hawthorne who had come to him at Liverpool about claims they believed they had to old English estates, was looking for such an estate in Hawthorne's story; and he would have the advantage, his creator supposed, of all the reality there was in Smithell's Hall, in Leicester's Hospital, and in the Warwickshire landscape concerning which the note-books stood ready to provide full documentation. But these things had lost their reality, as the style in which they tried to live had lost its music.

Now in Concord, in the fall of 1860, Hawthorne started over again. Until the Civil War broke out next spring he wrote steadily at a much longer fragment, the abortive romance known as *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret*. To call it a fragment is perhaps misleading. It is as long as most of his books, and would have been longer if Hawthorne had

carried out all his plans of enriching its parts. It even reaches a conclusion—the American claimant, now named Redclyffe, abandons his quest when the wondrous contents of a certain coffer turn out to be nothing but golden ringlets into which the entire bodily substance of a long-dead lady has been transposed. In *The Ancestral Footstep* there had been a Lilliputian cabinet which in the same fashion shrank the hero's hopes. Here once again are the hospitalers, and here too there is a running discussion of the difference between English and American manners, with the edge always given to those of Redclyffe and his kind—though Redclyffe himself, in a sort of perpetual daydream, cannot resist the fascination of the ancient race whose skeletons he is exposing, whose past he is, it may be, mistakenly restoring. For neither he nor Hawthorne can resolve the doubts inherent in this quest. As Hawthorne in his note-books had never been able to decide whether he adored his old home or despised it, so now he is sicklied over with digression and dialectic. At a similar moment in *The Ancestral Footstep* Middleton had suspected that "the moral, if any moral were to be gathered from these petty and wretched circumstances, was: 'Let the past alone; do not seek to renew it; press on to higher and better things—at all events, to other things. . . . Onward, onward, onward!'" Yet he had not desisted.

The Bloody Footprint is here too; Hawthorne was never to let it go in any of his fragments. It is even more important now, and shows a longer trail. At one end of the plot it oozes on the doorstep of a timeless English house whose inhabitants were once involved in a perilous complex of dire deeds; at the other end it is visible, or is said to have been visible, on the forest leaves of seventeenth-

century America. Half of *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret* is set in modern America, where in a town like Salem there is a house like that of Dr. Peabody on Charter Street, next to a burying-ground, and in this house there is a fantastic old physician, first named Ormskirk, then Etheredge, and at last Grimshawe, who has two children in charge. The boy Ned had been an English foundling—here we remember the West Derby Workhouse—and he will emerge as Redclyffe, for he is the American heir who later on, in a place like Smithell's Hall, will contest the title to an old estate with its present owner, a foreign-looking Catholic gentleman in whose sinister aspect nothing will survive of Hawthorne's flirtation, a year ago in *The Marble Faun*, with the faith of Rome. For Hawthorne, obsessed as he is with the notion that he needs an elaborate plot, has reverted to the gothic days of his youth, he is committed again to exotic villains, to potions, to documents, to wronged old men with long white hair, and above all to symbols of sin and suffering—in this case a footprint—which in spite of their improbability will not away. He holds on to such devices even when his imagination fails to credit them; the sign of his failure being the vagueness, recalling portions of *The Marble Faun*, with which he treats them. "Some dark-colored potation," "certain mysterious documents"—the words to notice here are "some" and "certain." They are the index to Hawthorne's anguish.

Anguish? The term is not extravagant. Nobody then, and least of all Sophia, knew how many words Hawthorne was pouring out in his lonely tower; for he was lonely again, in a worse sense than before, and lost—definitely lost. When Julian published the second fragment in 1883 and called it *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret* he did not dis-

close, nor did he fully know, how many starts his father had made on this one work alone. Two drafts of it survive, as well as six preliminary studies. A total of thirty-one such studies and drafts for all the fragments is clear proof that Hawthorne had lost his confidence. Formerly he had written with fair speed, straight along, finishing a work in the same winter in which it had been begun; for he wrote mainly in the cold months. Now his handwriting became crabbed; he crowded his pages; he blotted and scratched. He did not know any longer where straight ahead was. Whereas he once had played with his reader, suggesting multiple explanations of some singular fact, fact now played with him: he could not choose among his images, none felt to him like fact at all. Nothing fitted firmly into place, nothing stayed put, nothing seemed good enough to go on with. Had he lost his moral bearings? Had he ceased to believe, as sometimes he said he had, that romance was an acceptable product? Had his environment evaporated? Had the "fairy precinct" become a foolish myth? It is hard to select an answer.

But it is not hard to see how much trouble Hawthorne was having. Perhaps it reflects itself in the wonderful passage where Redclyffe, wounded on the estate he seeks, wakes up so slowly out of a long sleep. Oblivion is where Hawthorne might have longed to assign the nightmare of his project, which often seemed horrible to him, or if not horrible, absurd. The bloody footprint never became beautiful under his hand as the letter A, the crimson birthmark, the mechanical butterfly had been. He did not like it; he could not even believe it. Bits of his experience, floating in, at first were welcome; but they ended by being not so much transformed as bloated. Mr. Kirkup of Florence was



exaggerated into Dr. Grimshawe, exaggerated beyond sense or art. And Hawthorne, forced by his honesty to recognize such failures, paused in his manuscript to say so. Never before in his own case, and possibly never at all, had a romancer been so candid with himself. Toward the close of *The Ancestral Footstep* he had penned such tell-tale sentences as this: "The utmost pains must be taken with this incident to give it an air of reality." Or this: "The character must not be allowed to get vague." Then, when ruses suggested themselves, he at once said "No." "Of course, that will not do."

But this was nothing to what now took place. The desperate author of *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret* makes desperate fun of himself and of the stuff he fumbles. "This wretched old pensioner," he writes—"the stubborn old devil will not move." "This nonsense must be kept subordinate, however. 'Twont do." "Yes!" "No." "Why?" "True." "Hold on to this." "Who is he then?" "There may be a germ in this—I don't know." "How?—why?—what sense?" "Now, as for the girl? . . . Well, she need not be very rigidly accounted for." "Tomorrow, arrange the chain of events." "Early in the romance, introduce the story of the bloody footstep. Gather all sorts of picturesque about these characters and circumstances, and mystify about the old man and his spider." The old man, Grimshawe, had been Kirkup; the spider was a descendant of those in the British Museum; but they would not move. "The life is not yet breathed into this plot, after all my galvanic efforts. Not a spark of passion as yet. How shall it be attained? The Lord of Braithwaite Hall shall be a wretched, dissipated, dishonorable fellow. . . . Something monstrous he must be, yet within nature and romantic

probability—hard conditions! A murderer—'twont do at all. A Mahometan—pish! . . . Nothing mean must he be, but as wicked as you please. Shall he be preternatural? Not without a plausible explanation. What natural horror is there? A monkey? A Frankenstein? A man of straw? A man without a heart, made of machinery? . . . Nonsense! . . . A resurrection-man? What? what? what? A worshipper of the sun? A cannibal? a ghoul? a vampire? a man who lives by sucking the blood of the young and the beautiful? . . . Now for it! How? At any rate, he must have dreadful designs on Elsie—dreadful! dreadful! dreadful! . . . Ye Heavens! A man with a mortal disease?—a leprosy?—a eunuch?—a cork leg?—a golden touch?—a dead hand?—a false nose?—a glass eye? . . . A Rosicrucian? A Cagliostro? This wretched man! A crossing-sweeper?—a boot-black? . . . It can't be. . . . 'Twont do. . . . What habit can he have? Perhaps that of having a young child, fricasseed, served up to him for breakfast every morning. . . . Do not stick at any strangeness, or preternaturality; it can be softened down to any extent, however wild in its first conception. . . . Alas me! . . . How? how? how? . . . Pshaw! This wretched man, still. . . . Once he had a great temptation to do a horrible thing. Of course he yielded. . . . All this amounts to just nothing. I don't advance a step. He lives a solitary life. They avoid him. Why? Partly because they don't like him. . . . A propensity for drink? A tendency to feed on horse-flesh? A love of toads? . . . Amen! The thing? The thing? . . . What? The old bloody footstep business? No, that won't do. . . . But there must be something definite. . . . I can't see it. . . . Here I come to a standstill! . . . He has a secret ulcer. Bah! . . . I have not the least notion how to

get on. I never was in such a predicament before. . . . Now, here. The old Doctor's spider's web must, of course, have a signification. . . . This is good as an unshaped idea; but how is it to be particularized and put in action? . . . Could there be a document, a secret, somewhere in the old house? . . . That'll not do. No; we must get out of this idea. . . . Try back again. . . . But what? . . . How? . . . In what way? . . . Pish! . . . Lackaday! . . . Vastly probable! . . . So easily said—so impossible to do! Try back! What had this gentleman done? He had seduced the young wife of this man? I don't like that. Or his daughter or sister? Not much better, though the sister a little. . . . How easy to say such things! . . . What shall I do? . . . The devil knows. I don't. The girl continues to live with him; no, she is dead. . . . Pshaw! . . . Is the secret chamber affair too absurd? I fear it is: not only impossible, but, in a manner, flat and commonplace. . . . A great deal of grotesque fancy must be used in drawing this character. Oh, certainly! . . . Come on! Conceive such a man. . . . What? . . . This is not the right tack. . . . The poor old cuss, after thirty years of confinement. . . . Now for the old pensioner. . . . Perhaps his forefather was hanged by the Puritans; I think so. . . . Take the character of Cowper for this man: melancholic, gentle, shy, conscientious, censorious, . . . weak, ineffectual, . . . a want of the practical element in his nature. . . . In figure, Mr. Alcott."

The wonder is that *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret* reads as well as it does. It was still a great talent, of course, that tortured itself in the tower; as it was an unhappy man who labored there, his will driving his wit, his restlessness nagging him with a desire to get out and stop all this. But he knew he could not get out. He had to finish the romance.

And with a house on his back, as he put it to both Ticknor and Bridge in letters the next spring, he must "give up all thoughts of drifting about the world any more."

Spring brought the Civil War and stopped *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret* forever. Here now was the "hurricane" Hawthorne had long felt was coming. He never recovered from the disaster of its arrival. For to him it was pure disaster. Two years later, in the dedication of *Our Old Home*, he was to tell Pierce in public: "The Present, the Immediate, the Actual, has proved too potent for me." His unwritten romance, that "abortive project," had become "a shattered dream." The materials of *Our Old Home* had been "intended for the side scenes and backgrounds and exterior adornment of a work of fiction of which the plan had imperfectly developed itself"; but now there could be no plan. For one thing, Hawthorne found the heart gone out of the discussions he had hoped to write, as digressions in his romance, on the subject of English and American manners. American manners were engulfed; henceforth there might be no such thing at all, for there might be no America. The entity he defended in England had become, by the act of war, no entity. "Whatever happens next," he wrote Bridge in May 1861, "I must say that I rejoice that the old Union is smashed. We never were one people, and never really had a country since the Constitution was formed." He said this perversely, for at least until this moment he had believed no such thing. The biographer of Pierce had sung hymns to the Union. With Pierce he now deplored the terrible event.

It was terrible to him personally, for it was more than a literary defeat. He thought his kind of writing had been killed, and continued to think so even after he resumed his

efforts at the romance—its mysteries then seemed largely mechanical to him, yet he kept on juggling them. But things were worse than that. The war was a more gruesome tale than he had ever imagined, and it was not a tale either; it was a “picturesque and gloomy wrong” made actual, made present; it forced him to feel. Hawthorne, like most persons capable of emotion, had avoided emotion when he could. He had not been able to do so when he was writing *The Scarlet Letter*. This was something like that, but with the glory of creation missing. He felt a degree, perhaps, of Hilda’s misery in *The Marble Faun* when she found that evil had come into her world. War was evil; Hawthorne had always thought so; but this was an evil war, for it was murdering America. He could not even agree with Pierce that the Union had deserved something better than the operation now being performed upon its vitals. The Union itself was dead; so the war might as well go on as swiftly as possible, and the boundaries be settled. Hawthorne preferred that they should be settled by the North, which he wanted to win. “If compelled to choose,” he had written Bridge as early as 1857, “I go for the North. New England is quite as large a lump of earth as my heart can really take in.” He was not in any sense, however, patriotic. He despised the virtue, and in England he had been amused, not to say amazed, by the way it expressed itself there—humanly, in flesh and blood, not in the cold, hard American way suggesting “the steel spring that puts in motion a powerful machinery.” He liked the mechanical way better. The man who had made so much of the human heart thought of it as a thing for individuals, not for an abstraction he called The American People. He therefore could not agree with Pierce that the war should

stop. It had its uses, now that it had begun: it could settle something. But he took care never to agree with the common sentiment. He was thought by his neighbors, and by those who read the few passages he wrote about the war, a cold and disappointing citizen. He was trying to be cold. For one thing, he was trying to see into the future, which he knew the war would make different. He never saw very far. In England he had witnessed the high-water mark of the industrial revolution, and here at home he may have understood how soon his own people were to obliterate that mark. But he took no pride in the certainty of such change.

His first correspondence after hostilities opened shows him radically off balance. He is even excited, and regretful that at fifty-seven he is too old to shoulder a musket. He wants to be doing something at any rate, now that fiction has become "trash and nonsense." His letters to Bright and Bennoch abroad must have bemused those friends, who were already puzzled enough by a war they could not understand. Hawthorne himself was bemused: alternating between enthusiasm and disgust, feeling for that tone of mockery of which he always had been master—feeling for it and rarely finding it—he must have seemed a riddle to his own mirror. He was consistent only in that he proved in every sentence how deep his disturbance was. There was but one thing he knew for sure. The romance was done for.

Yet in the fall of 1861 he began it again. In February 1862 he wrote Bridge, who had invited him to Washington, that he was "not very well, being mentally and physically languid," and also that he was "pretending to write a book." This was *Septimius Felton*, the third of his four

fragments—and again it is misleading to say fragment, for the work is copious, and Hawthorne wrote it twice, as well as scribbled eight preparatory studies for its characters and scenes. It even comes to a conclusion, as *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret* did.

The mental and physical languor of which Bridge had been informed may have been felt by the writer of *Septimius Felton*, but it is not felt by the reader. There is a freshness in this fragment, a pleasure in its own rapid movement, such as Middleton and Redclyffe—those hesitant seekers, those meditative claimants—had been unable to inspire. Hawthorne “starts back” over the old ground, and saves a good deal of its standing growth; the Bloody Footstep is still with him, and so is the transatlantic estate. Dr. Grimshawe is revived in Dr. Portsoaken; and Crusty Hannah, the old woman who attended Grimshawe, is even more interesting as Keziah, the hero's shrill-voiced aunt. The lineage of both these dames is long in Hawthorne's work, for they recall Tabitha and Mother Rigby, and even Hepzibah Pyncheon. This indeed may help to explain the relative success of *Septimius Felton*. For Hawthorne is freer now of his recent note-books—so free that he can range back over all the matters with which his imagination has been busy from the beginning. He has been blamed for gleaning thus the old fields of his fancy. But it had always profited him to do so; his was the kind of imagination, like Shakespeare's, that could revisit itself. Somewhat in the fashion of *The Tempest*, whose author remembered *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the same moment with *King Lear*, *Septimius Felton* enriches itself with past treasures. Sibyl Dacy, the hero's nemesis no less than his victim, is something like Sylph Etherege and the put-

upon Priscilla; and Rose Garfield, first the hero's sweetheart and then, by change, his sister, runs back in her cheerful simplicity to Phoebe Pyncheon. But the chief instance is the hero himself, and the idea with which he is obsessed. Henry James, who thought Septimius was not to be taken seriously, could not have been interested, as Hawthorne of course was, in the elixir of life, that impossible theme from which he had tried so many times to extract possibility. Now in the shadow of his own death, two years away, he tries again—with astonishing vigor, and with a certain bright beauty in the result.

The year of *Septimius Felton* is 1775 and the place is Concord. A war is starting—a war with which the hero will have nothing to do because like Fanshawe he is a pure student, occupied only with science. He is like Aylmer and Rappaccini too, for his temptation is to transgress the limits of nature; he is bent upon finding a formula that will produce immortality on earth. Hawthorne's interest in this theme may have been reawakened in 1852 by Thoreau's telling him that a former inhabitant of the Wayside had believed he would never die; and he had touched its circumference in *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret*, where an aged man, imprisoned nobody knew how long in a secret chamber, struck Redclyffe as being—yet was it possible?—a “deathless” person. But Hawthorne's interest was as old as his literary life. Nor was it simple. If the waters of the elixir hypnotized his fancy—he always did wonderful work in describing their delicious coolness, their superb color, their supernal light—he was even more concerned with the spiritual states of those who believed in their efficacy, and hence in the indefinite prolongation of life. He never shared the belief, except by that weird process which permitted



him, a skeptic, to believe everything and nothing at once. Now, in *Septimius Felton*, his desire is to sum up all the arguments he has considered before; and beyond that to study the mind of one who believes—in itself, and in the effect it has upon other minds. The danger in any such case, of course, is that the believer shall seem to be a fool. Hawthorne, aware of the danger, guards against it with all his will.

His hero is interesting, however, for another reason than that he hugs a delusion and holds discussions of it with several persons. Hawthorne has connected him with the theme of the English inheritance by having him kill, during the battle of Concord, a young British officer who represents that inheritance. Hawthorne has remembered the boy who murdered the soldier with his axe; but he has made the incident beautiful. The death of the officer by a bullet that pierces the miniature he carries, and pierces the folded paper on which the recipe for an elixir will be found, is one of the most touching and brilliant events in all of Hawthorne. So is the burial; and so is the discovery later on that the face obliterated from the miniature is the face of Sibyl Dacy, a mysterious girl who comes from nowhere to stoop and study the exotic flowers sprung up from the grave. The grave is on a hill that resembles the hill behind Hawthorne's house. As Hawthorne walked on this hill, so Septimius walks on his; and comes to love Sibyl, whose voluntary death at last is by drinking the elixir. But the grave with its sinister, dark flowers is the center of the story. Hawthorne had always been fascinated and repulsed by the spectacle of such flowers. Rappaccini's sin was to create them; and had not *The Scarlet Letter* spoken of "the black flower of civilized society, a prison"? This

grave is one of Hawthorne's triumphs, along with the incident that produced it: the brief, heartbreaking duel between two excellent young men who had no reason to hate each other, but rather had reason—and the death of one brings this about—to love each other in a dreamlike, lingering fashion. The smile on the face of the boy officer when he knows he is dying has something of the “angelic calmness and repose” a passage in Hawthorne's note-book for 1837 had ascribed to the countenance of a duelist he was told of in that year; something, too, of the sweetness and happiness which a Lieutenant Richardson had told him in England, in 1856, of having seen on the face of a British officer he shot during the battle of New Orleans. Hawthorne has brought both memories to bear upon a remarkable scene, as he has recalled for the grave—or used without recalling—the following paragraph from his note-book for 1836: “A girl's lover to be slain and buried in her flower-garden, and the earth levelled over him. That particular spot, which she happens to plant with some peculiar variety of flowers, produces them of admirable splendor, beauty, and perfume; and she delights, with an indescribable impulse, to wear them in her bosom, and scent her chamber with them. Thus the classic fantasy would be realized, of dead people transformed to flowers.” The image of a face purified by sudden death had been used in *The Ancestral Footstep* before it was used in *Septimius Felton*; the image of the flowers was reserved for this fragment alone.

The war that Hawthorne was living through, not the quaint shadow of it Septimius saw, thrust itself into his mind again. In March 1862 he accepted Bridge's invitation to Washington after all. Accompanied by Ticknor, who as usual handled the money and protected Hawthorne

from having to meet strangers, he went as he had gone in 1853, by New York and Philadelphia. This time he insisted on going slowly—so slowly that Ticknor, whose one desire had been to see “the grand view of the Army” as it crossed the Potomac, never saw that sight. They stayed a month, and Hawthorne had his fill of the conflict at close range; curiosity had moved him to go, boredom drove him back. In addition to Washington he visited Fortress Monroe, Manassas, and Harpers Ferry, where he saw some Confederate prisoners; and in Washington, where he joined a Massachusetts delegation for the purpose, he called on Lincoln.

The article, “Chiefly About War Matters,” which as a result he published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for July is perhaps a unique composition of its kind. Few current events of equal magnitude have been reported with equal detachment. Fields, as editor of the *Atlantic*, thought rightly that the tone would be too cold for his readers, and offered to save Hawthorne embarrassment by suppressing certain passages. The passages were suppressed, but Hawthorne, posing as editor, supplied footnotes explaining the omissions. “We omit several paragraphs here, in which the author speaks of some prominent Members of Congress with a freedom that seems to have been not unkindly meant, but might be liable to misconstruction.” “We are again compelled to interfere with our friend’s license of personal description and criticism.” Or he commented thus upon a passage, not deleted, wherein he had tried to understand what it meant for the South to have armies quartered on its soil: “We do not thoroughly comprehend the author’s drift in the foregoing paragraphs, but are inclined to think its tone reprehensible, and its tendency

impolitic in the present stage of our national difficulties." And thus upon a paragraph in which he had said that "nobody was ever more justly hanged" than John Brown: "Can it be a son of old Massachusetts who utters this abominable sentiment? For shame!"

The footnotes, like the body of the article, made some readers doubt that Hawthorne was human. But that is precisely what he was attempting to be: a thinking, charitable man. He could not have hated the prisoners he saw at Harpers Ferry if he had tried. And he could not have come away admiring Lincoln unless he had gone to see him with an open mind. Fields cut out the famous portrait of Lincoln, and Hawthorne of course supplied a note: "The sketch appears to have been written in a benign spirit, and perhaps conveys a not inaccurate impression of its august subject; but it lacks *reverence*, and it pains us to see a gentleman of ripe age, and who has spent years under the corrective influence of foreign institutions, falling into the characteristic and most ominous fault of Young America." Now that the cut has been restored we can guess why Fields made it in the first place; the portrait is neither sentimental nor savage, and most contemporary accounts of Lincoln were one of those things or the other. It is singularly clear-seeing; and for an observer with so little prior warmth toward his subject it achieves impressive praise. It is, in fact, one of the best sketches of Lincoln ever drawn.

Hawthorne kept his eye on the object: "a tall, loose-jointed figure, of an exaggerated Yankee port and demeanor, . . . about the homeliest man I ever saw, yet by no means repulsive or disagreeable. . . . There is no describing his lengthy awkwardness, nor the uncouthness of

his movement; and yet it seemed as if I had been in the habit of seeing him daily, and had shaken hands with him a thousand times in some village street; so true was he to the aspect of the pattern American, though with a certain extravagance which, possibly, I exaggerated still further by the delighted eagerness with which I took it in. If put to guess his calling and livelihood, I should have taken him for a country schoolmaster as soon as anything else. He was dressed in a rusty black frock coat and pantaloons, unbrushed, and worn so faithfully that the suit had adapted itself to the curves and angularities of his figure, and had grown to be an outer skin of the man. He had shabby slippers on his feet. His hair was black, still unmixed with gray, stiff, somewhat bushy, and had apparently been acquainted with neither brush nor comb that morning, after the disarrangement of the pillow. . . . The whole physiognomy is as coarse a one as you would meet anywhere in the length and breadth of the States; but, withal, it is redeemed, illuminated, softened, and brightened by a kindly though serious look out of his eyes, and an expression of homely sagacity that seems weighted with rich results of village experience. A great deal of native sense; no bookish cultivation, no refinement; honest at heart, and thoroughly so, and yet, in some sort, sly—at least, endowed with a sort of tact and wisdom that are akin to craft, and would impel him, I think, to take an antagonist in flank, rather than to make a bull-run at him right in front. But on the whole I like this sallow, queer, sagacious visage, with the homely sympathies that warmed it; and for my small share in the matter, would as lief have Uncle Abe for a ruler as any man whom it would have been practicable to put in his place.” Hawthorne, in a word, had found Lincoln his

own kind of man, the Jacksonian kind he preferred to any other; and in his simple, brilliant way he said so.

But he showed Lincoln in action, too. The party, kept waiting half an hour while the President finished his breakfast, heard at last "a little stir on the staircase and in the passage-way," and saw the incredible figure lounge in. He greeted a member of Congress in charge of the party "with a comical twist of his face," and made "some jocular remark about the length of his breakfast. He then greeted us all round, not waiting for an introduction, but shaking and squeezing everybody's hand with the utmost cordiality, whether the individual's name was announced to him or not. His manner towards us was wholly without pretence, but yet had a kind of natural dignity, quite sufficient to keep the forwardest of us from clapping him on the back and asking him for a story." The Hawthorne of the notebooks, in which so many persons are so coolly, so candidly, so justly preserved, wrote these words. Hawthorne's own opinion was that they were the single part of the article worth publishing. "What a terrible thing it is," he told Fields, "to try to let off a little bit of truth into this miserable humbug of a world."

Even now he was showing his age—shockingly, some said, though it was to be much worse in a few more months. The photograph taken by Brady at Washington in this same spring reveals a man much changed from the handsome teller of moral tales with whom Sophia had fallen in love; or for that matter from the man with whom she had gone to Europe. He is heavier, he is whiter, and he is more afraid. Of what he is afraid it would not be easy to say; but there is sullen fear in the still handsome face.

Hawthorne continued nevertheless to prepare his Eng-

lish note-books for publication, first as magazine articles and then, in the summer of 1863, as *Our Old Home*. He considered this hack work, and would have preferred to be left alone with his romance, ordeal and punishment though that was. But he needed money; and perhaps he got more pleasure out of *Our Old Home* than he let on. Henry James thought it the best written of all his books, and even Emerson admired the chapter on Delia Bacon. The opening chapter, entitled "Consular Experiences," is a close rival to "The Custom House" on the score of wit and of relish taken in the experience described. Here again Hawthorne reduced his subject to workable size and nicely conquered it; the consulate at Liverpool, like the surveyor's office at Salem, becomes a little world which we explore with him to our utter satisfaction, congratulating ourselves because we have been admitted into every closet and corner. Yet something of the same sort can be said of every other chapter. *Our Old Home* is as honest and intimate on every page as Hawthorne knew how to make it.

At Liverpool in 1856 he had read Emerson's *English Traits* and had written the author: "Undoubtedly these are the truest pages that have yet been written about this country. Some of them seem to me absolutely true—as regards others, the truth has not been made apparent to me by my own observation. . . . I am afraid it will please the English only too well, for you give them credit for the possession . . . of all the qualities that they value or pride themselves upon; and they never will comprehend that what you deny is far greater and higher than what you concede. In fact, you deny them only what they would be ashamed of if they possessed it." This is perhaps a perfect piece of criticism, for while it recognizes

the shining power of Emerson's masterpiece it spares none of its shortcomings. These two men of Concord are by chance the authors of the two best books, or nearly so, ever written about England. But the books are as different as the men. Emerson's angel wit is nowhere echoed in Hawthorne's sober though no less exciting sentences. Hawthorne, writer of sketches, is interested only in what he sees and can believe. If the Jewish beauty he saw at the Lord Mayor of London's dinner—and remembered when he made Miriam, for even then she was available in the note-books—is beautiful indeed, we can credit Hawthorne with thinking that she was. If the chapter on English poverty is horrible, we can be sure that to him the subject had seemed so. If he saw fit to say that the ladies of England, while more substantial than their American cousins, were still not Hester Prynnes—were, indeed, but beef and tallow, as if “made up of steaks and sirloins”—we can believe that he did not care too much when the ladies in question, reading his book, protested. He cared for nothing but what he saw.

He dedicated the book to Pierce because it was Pierce who had sent him to England, and because he loved him. Emerson tore this page out of his copy, and doubtless there were others who refused to buy copies at all. Fields, knowing that such things would happen, had written Hawthorne to advise him against the dedication. He received this answer three days later, on July 18th: “I thank you for your note of the 15th instant, and have delayed my reply thus long in order to ponder deeply on your advice, smoke cigars over it, and see what it might be possible for me to do towards taking it. I find that it would be a piece of poltroonery in me to withdraw either the dedication or the



dedicatory letter. My long and intimate personal relations with Pierce render the dedication altogether proper, especially as regards this book, which would have had no existence without his kindness; and if he is so exceedingly unpopular that his name is enough to sink the volume, there is so much the more need that an old friend should stand by him. I cannot, merely on account of pecuniary profit or literary reputation, go back from what I have deliberately felt and thought it right to do; and if I were to tear out the dedication, I should never look at the volume again without remorse and shame. As for the literary public, it must accept my book precisely as I think fit to give it, or let it alone. Nevertheless, I have no fancy for making myself a martyr when it is honorably and conscientiously possible to avoid it; and I always measure out my heroism very accurately according to the exigencies of the occasion, and should be the last man in the world to throw away a bit of it needlessly. So I have looked over the concluding paragraph and have amended it in such a way that, while doing what I know to be justice to my friend, it contains not a word that ought to be objectionable to any set of readers. If the public of the North see fit to ostracize me for this, I can only say that I would gladly sacrifice a thousand or two of dollars rather than retain the good-will of such a herd of dolts and mean-spirited scoundrels. I enclose the rewritten paragraph, and shall wish to see a proof of that and the whole dedication."

This is pure Hawthorne—particularly in the part where he mocks his own heroism. For it was heroism to go as Hawthorne did against the general feeling about Pierce, a feeling that soon enough expressed itself in letters and reviews. Oddly—or perhaps not oddly—the book sold all the

better for the rumpus it raised, but Hawthorne had not counted on that. He had decided to dedicate his book "as a slight memorial of a college friendship, prolonged through manhood, and retaining all its vitality in our autumnal years." He did so; and whatever slight alteration he made in the text, he still praised the perfect loyalty of Pierce to his "grand idea of an irrevocable Union."

The dedicatory letter is dated July 2, 1863. Two days later—and this in large part explains the behavior of Fields—Hawthorne sat on the platform in Concord, New Hampshire, while Pierce made a speech which at once was widely denounced as "treasonable." Pierce denied that war—this war—could save the Constitution. It was the day of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, and Hawthorne for one could not have been sorry that such victories were hastening the end of hostilities. But he was on the platform; and this was remembered when on the very day *Our Old Home* was published the New York *Evening Post* printed a letter which Pierce had written to Jefferson Davis in 1860, saying: "I have never believed that actual disruption of the Union can occur without blood; and if through the madness of Northern abolitionists that dire calamity must come, the fighting will not be along Mason and Dixon's line merely. It will be within our own borders, in our own streets. . . . Those who defy law and scout constitutional obligations will, if we ever reach the arbitrament of arms, find occupation at home." Hawthorne would not have assented to this, for he was no Copperhead. But he accepted his share of the abuse it brought down on Pierce; and in a letter to Elizabeth Peabody, written on July 20th, he went out of his way to defend the friend whom he now knew he had hurt, not helped, by his dedication. "A traitor!

Why, he is the only loyal man in the country, North or South. Everybody else has outgrown the old faith in the Union . . . but Pierce retains it in all the simplicity with which he inherited it from his father. . . . There is a certain steadfastness and integrity with regard to a man's own nature (when it is such a peculiar nature as that of Pierce) which seems to me more sacred and valuable than the faculty of adapting oneself to new ideas, however true they may turn out to be." As for the war now going on, "it will only effect by a horrible convulsion the self-same end that might and would have been brought about by a gradual and peaceful change. Nor am I at all certain that it will effect that end." Nothing in Hawthorne had changed.

Nothing in him had changed except his health, which went inexplicably from worse to worse. For he seemed to have no disease; he simply weakened and whitened. Everybody noticed the difference in his face, his shoulders, his walk. He was easily exhausted, and his silence could not conceal the fact that he was anxious about himself—not merely the war, or the prices that imperiled his already inadequate savings, but the condition of his mind and body, neither one of which he had been in the habit of worrying about. He attempted concealment; he would let nothing be done for him; he even dared his condition by dragging down logs that had been cut for him on the hill. But Sophia missed the "exquisite frolic" in his eyes, and observed in him an "utter restlessness." "He needs change immensely," she wrote to Mrs. Fields. "I am afraid that Concord is not the best place for him, and that he requires a city life, with a secure retreat in the midst as well. He takes cold every day . . . and has a slight feverishness with it." She thought

it might be Roman fever, Una's disease. Una had not perfectly recovered, and that was another worry.

In such a state he persisted with his fourth attempt at the romance. In August 1863 he even permitted Fields to announce that a new work by him would appear in the *Atlantic Monthly*, beginning with the January number. He bent over that "abominable little tool," his pen, in a heroic effort to get on with his great tale at last. And by some miracle the pieces of it he did produce came near to being the brightest and best of all his work. The surviving fragments of this fourth fragment, which he named *The Dolliver Romance*, have an astonishing force, a reassuring grace. Again his theme is the elixir of life—an impossible theme, and Hawthorne gets nowhere with it, but now it becomes an allegory in which he himself has a role. *The Dolliver Romance* is an intricate, a delicate, a cunning comment upon its author's developing senility. Dr. Dolliver, who lives beside a graveyard with his great-granddaughter Pansie and her kitten, is neither Mr. Kirkup of Florence nor Dr. Grimshawe of the black bottle and the bloated spiders; he is Hawthorne grown old, and the good wife Bessie who died so long ago is perhaps Sophia, and Pansie is certainly the Una of 1849. The kitten, who sits on the apothecary's frail shoulder at breakfast, "purring like a spinning wheel, trying her claws in the wadding of his dressing gown, and still more impressively reminding him of her presence by putting out a paw to intercept a warmed-over morsel of yesterday's chicken on its way" to his mouth, could be any creature of its kind in which he had ever taken delight. Hawthorne is free now of his notebooks and his plans. He writes with a pleased freshness, a sort of startled vigor, out of his present mind; and if that

mind has its failing moments, he reflects them too, with an amused smile playing over every phrase, in the efforts of Grandsir Dolliver to remember who he is, and in the "parallelogram of bright sunshine" he takes care to stand on while he dresses. The striking thing is Hawthorne's amusement. The self-portrait is not in its least line sentimental. It is as if the author of "The Custom House," remembering how in that work he had made merciless fun of old men, were bent now, though without any bitterness, upon administering the same medicine, the same justice, to his own oddly aging bones. He had always done well with aged men. But recently, with the pensioners of Leicester's Hospital, he had been dull. Brightness is back, and a clear, high tone that would seem to say there is nothing at all the matter with Nathaniel Hawthorne.

He is happy for one thing because he has by luck, or perhaps by a very intelligent use of his will, succeeded in maneuvering the elixir theme into a tolerable position at last. One trouble with Septimius Felton had been that no good reason appeared for his wanting to live forever. Dr. Dolliver has the benevolent reason that Pansie—perhaps she is Sophia now—must not be left alone in the world. This is why, poking among the herbs and the recipes he has inherited, he conceives the scheme of making himself grow younger each day that she grows older; they will pass each other in time, and when he has become a child again she will be a woman who no longer needs protection. Nothing in fact could have been done with this idea. It is unreal, and the Colonel Dabney of these pages, an echo of Hawthorne's early villains, is a sign that if Hawthorne had lived he would have got tangled in another plot beyond his powers, or for that matter beyond anybody's powers.

Colonel Dabney lugs in once more the bloody footstep, an "old musty bit of parchment," and an estate to which someone has "the right of three hundred years." Hawthorne, weary of such furniture, undoubtedly wished it away; he must have known now that he could neither let it alone nor make it work. But it would not go away, and it is our good fortune that *The Dolliver Romance* breaks off where it does. It is nothing but a document. It is, however, a document of great price. It shows as few things do how much more courage there was in this romancer than he cared to confess, how much more wit he had than most of his readers suspected, how much sheer strength, indeed, he had always concealed beneath the languid, not very forcible charm he chose to affect.

In any case *The Dolliver Romance* was doomed, for its author was dying. Sophia felt "the wildest anxiety"; and when in December Hawthorne went to the funeral of Pierce's wife, Pierce, standing by the grave beside his friend, drew up the collar of his coat "to shield him from the bitter cold." Sophia in the same month wrote of her husband that "the splendor and pride of strength in him have succumbed; . . . he is very nervous and delicate; he cannot bear anything, and he must be handled like the airiest Venetian glass." By spring he had lost weight alarmingly, he walked unsteadily, and his senses were going. No wonder he wrote Fields in December: "I have not yet had courage to read the Dolliver proof-sheet, but will set about it soon, though with terrible reluctance, such as I never felt before. . . . If you happen to see Mr. — of L—, a young man who was here last summer, pray tell him anything that your conscience will let you, to induce him to spare me another visit, which I know he intended.

I really am not well and cannot be disturbed by strangers without more suffering than it is worth while to endure." And in January: "Seriously, my mind has, for the present, lost its temper and its fine edge, and I have an instinct that I had better keep quiet. Perhaps I shall have a new spirit of vigor, if I wait quietly for it; perhaps not." And in February: "I hardly know what to say to the public about this abortive Romance, though I know pretty well what the case will be. I shall never finish it. . . . If I could but go to England now, I think that the sea voyage and the 'Old Home' might set me all right. This letter is for your own eye, and I wish especially that no echo of it may come back in your notes to me."

Roger Chillingworth had said to Arthur Dimmesdale: "A bodily disease, which we look upon as whole and entire within itself, may, after all, be but a symptom of some ailment in the spiritual part." No one, not even Dr. Holmes, could say what bodily disease Hawthorne was suffering from. If the ailment was in his spiritual part, his daughter Rose detected no weakness there. Though he had lost his appetite, she says, he still came formally to the table in his best black coat; for "he hated failure, dependence, and disorder, broken rules and weariness of discipline, as he hated cowardice. I cannot express how brave he seemed to be." His thoughts, whatever they were, he kept strictly to himself. When Una was a child in Salem she had asked him one day, the note-books show, to "write sixty-four on her hand; probably there is some destiny or other connected with this particular number." It had become a habit with him to write it on paper, and the habit was particularly noticeable now, in the year 1864. Perhaps he desired more than anything else to sleep. It was an act, or a state, of

which he had always written sweetly. "An Old Woman's Tale," one of his youthful pieces, had told of a village all of whose inhabitants, at certain intervals, "were subject to a simultaneous slumber, continuing one hour's space." In "The Old Manse" he had played with the notion that "the great want which mankind labors under at this present moment is sleep. The world should recline its vast head on the first convenient pillow and take an age-long nap." And recently in Washington, when immortality was being discussed, an Englishman had heard him say: "Ah, I hope there will be a break. A couple of thousand years or so of sleep is the least I can do with before I begin life again."

In March, wisely or not, it was decided that Hawthorne, instead of sleeping, should take a trip to the south. Ticknor of course went with him; first to New York, where a cold rain kept them in their hotel for days; then to Philadelphia, where similar weather got the better at last of Ticknor himself. Driving in Fairmount Park with his friend, he gave him his coat to wear; and a few days later, on April 10th, was dead of pneumonia. Hawthorne, so dazed that he kept saying there must be some mistake—it was he who had died—made such arrangements as were necessary, waited till Ticknor's son came, and then went home. He arrived unexpectedly, so that he had to walk from the station. "As soon as I saw his face," says Sophia, "I was frightened out of all knowledge of myself—so haggard, so white, so deeply scored with pain and fatigue—so much more ill he looked than I ever saw him before. . . . His brow was streaming with a perfect rain—so great had been the effort to walk so far. . . . I have read to him all the afternoon and evening and after he waked in the morning today. I do nothing but sit with him, ready to do or not do—just as he wishes. . . .



He is my world and all the business of it. . . . The light for the time has gone all out of his eyes entirely."

Yet she thought he should leave Concord again, and he thought she was right. On May 12th he went with Pierce—whose love for Hawthorne, Sophia said, was "the strongest passion of his soul, now his wife is departed"—by train to Concord, New Hampshire, where they intended proceeding by coach. Sophia saw the two white-haired men off at the station. One of them suspected he would never come back, and she knew which one this was.

On the night of May 18th Hawthorne went to sleep in Plymouth, New Hampshire. "A door opened from my room to his," Pierce wrote to Bridge a few days later, "and our beds were not more than five or six feet apart. I remained up an hour or two after he fell asleep. He was apparently less restless than the night before. The light was burning in my room—the door open—and I could see him without moving from my bed. I went, however, between one and two o'clock to his bedside, and supposed him to be in a profound slumber. His eyes were closed, his position and face perfectly natural. His face was towards my bed. I awoke again between three and four o'clock, and was surprised—as he had generally been restless—to notice that his position was unchanged—exactly the same that it was two hours before. I went to his bedside, placed my hand upon his forehead and temple, and found that he was dead. . . . I need not tell you how lonely I am, and how full of sorrow."

"Yesterday, May 23," wrote Emerson in his Journal, "we buried Hawthorne in Sleepy Hollow, in a pomp of sunshine and verdure and gentle winds. . . . I thought there was a tragic element in the event—in the painful soli-

tude of the man, which, I suppose, could not longer be endured, and he died of it."

As Sophia's carriage left the cemetery it passed, with their heads uncovered, Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, Whittier, Lowell, Agassiz, Alcott, Hillard, and Pierce. Bridge was ill in Washington and could not come. Sophia went back to the Wayside, and on this day or another wrote to Mrs. Fields: "When I see that I deserved nothing and that my Father gave me the richest destiny for so many years . . . I am struck dumb with an ecstasy of gratitude. . . . God gave to his beloved sleep. . . . I have no more to ask but that I may be able to comfort all who mourn as I am comforted. If I could bear all sorrow I would be glad—because God has turned for me the silver lining and for me the darkest cloud has broken into ten thousand singing birds—as I saw in my dream that I told you. So in another dream long ago God showed me a gold thread passing through each mesh of a black pall that seemed to shut out the sun. I comprehend all now. Before I did not doubt. Now God says in soft thunders, 'Even so!'"

Emerson went on: "I have found in his death a surprise and disappointment. I thought him a greater man than any of his works betray, that there was still a great deal of work in him, and that he might some day show a purer power."

It is true that Hawthorne repays every effort we make to know the man he was. But Emerson was unacquainted even with that man; and as for the works, he never felt their purest power. The tragic element in the event is not that there was too little power; in *The Scarlet Letter* alone there was enough. It is that Hawthorne, whether from indolence or from confusion, or from the modesty which

he cultivated till it became a fault, so seldom let it go. Even then there is enough. The purity of *The Scarlet Letter* is in its power, and neither quality can perish.

The imperishable thing in Hawthorne is not, as some have said, his prose. "I am glad you think my style plain," he wrote to an editor in 1851. "I never, in any one page or paragraph, aimed at making it anything else, or giving it any other merit—and I wish people would leave off talking about its beauty. If it have any, it is only pardonable as being unintentional. The greatest possible merit of style is, of course, to make the words absolutely disappear into the thought." His one deathless virtue is that rare thing in any literature, an utterly serious imagination. It was serious, and so it was loving; it was loving, and so it could laugh; it could laugh, and so it could endure the horror it saw in every human heart. But it saw the honor there along with the horror, the dignity by which in some eternity our pain is measured. Hawthorne was out of touch with his time, and he will be out of touch with any time. He thought man was immortal: a mistake made only by the greatest writers.



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A collection of paintings, drawings, and photographs of Hawthorne is published in reproduction by the Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts.



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